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GRAMOPHONE

US & CANADA SOUNDS OF AMERICA

A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

Cipullo • Laitman

Cipullo After Life^a

Laitman In Sleep the World is Yours^b

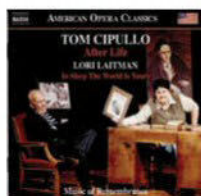
^bMegan Chenovick, ^aCatherine Cook,

^aAva Pine soprs ^aRobert Orth bar

Music of Remembrance / Mina Miller

Naxos American Opera Classics © 8 669036

(67' • DDD • T)



For their seventh Naxos CD, Seattle-based Music of Remembrance

pair world premiere recordings of two recent Holocaust remembrance commissions, joining previous recordings of commissions from composers including Jake Heggie, Paul Schoenfield and Thomas Pasatieri.

Tom Cipullo's *After Life* is a discursive, one-act, three-person chamber opera in which the ghosts of Picasso (Catherine Cook), Gertrude Stein (Robert Orth) – more Ma and Pa Kettle than *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* – and a spiritually innocent young girl (Ava Pine) confront the moral and physical minefields of the Second World War. Cipullo weaves David Mason's ingenious, rhapsodic libretto into an absorbing, often lively, occasionally desultory narrative told in words and music that is translucently scored and makes full use of the five-member ensemble's colours, astonishingly vocal at times in their effect.

Lori Laitman's 18-minute *In Sleep the World is Yours* is a simpler, more profoundly distilled response to the Holocaust in the form of a mother-and-child song-cycle set to elegiac lyrics by Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, dead at 18 at a Nazi camp in Ukraine. In a sense, Laitman's three songs continue the conversation about life and art begun in *After Life*, deeply concerned with the ineffectualness of art during extreme human crises unless the creative force is pure. Stein and Picasso compromised and wound up being unable to distinguish art from life, which robbed their work of its potency.

The clear, full-bodied Benaroya Hall recordings, made in April and May 2015, feature excellent playing by members of

GRAMOPHONE talks to...

John D Rojak

The New York bass trombonist explains the thinking behind his new album, 'Rojak Rocks'

How did you go about choosing the repertoire for 'Rojak Rocks'?

I met Jack Gale while I was subbing on the Broadway show *Sweeney Todd*. He gave me Three Pieces for bass trombone and jazz rhythm section, a 12-note piece with a jazz feel. I wanted to record it for years so built this project around it. I found other rep that had some commercial aspects and hadn't been recorded. Sacco's Sonata fit beautifully into that model, as did *Ba-Dee-Doo-Dup*, and the Ross concerto. When I played Raph's *Rock*, I knew that all could be tied together perfectly.

Why the bass trombone?

When I was a freshman in college, there was a bass trombone opening in one of the top ensembles at my school. I thought it would be nice to play in the orchestra so grabbed a school instrument and took the chair. Turns out it was a much better fit for me than the tenor trombone – I like the low notes!



Tell us about the recording of *Rock*.

The Moab Music Festival plays concerts in beautiful venues. One was in Hunter Canyon and I thought it would be fitting to play *Rock* there. I had planned to record it in a studio, adding drums, but playing in the echoing canyon was far superior. Being brutally hot in summer, we had to finish soon after the sun came over the ridge or my lips would be seared to my mouthpiece.

What's next, recordings-wise?

In July, I'm planning on recording *Deep Time* for bassoon, bass trombone, cello and bass that Paul Moravec wrote for me. It's very cool and could be the impetus for another theme.

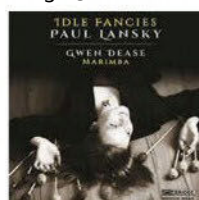
the Seattle Symphony, including cellist Walter Gray, a founding member of the Kronos Quartet. **Laurence Vitte**

Lansky

Idle Fancies. Spirals. Three Moves

Gwendolyn Dease marimba/perc

Bridge © BRIDGE9454 (50' • DDD)



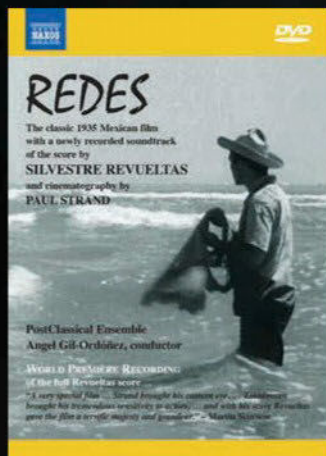
Having retired in 2014 from Princeton, where he served for 45 years, Paul Lansky continues to record for Bridge. This time it's his complete music for solo marimba performed by the young virtuoso Gwendolyn Dease,

who won his artistic heart with her self-produced video of *Idle Fancies*, an encouraging lesson to the young and entrepreneurially minded.

Idle Fancies is a stunning piece, a 26'33" *tour de force* for marimba and cowbell, agogo bells, almglocken and other instruments, which seems unassuming at first until an audiophile woodblock effect triggers a series of seductive swirls that engage the ear. Commissioned by a consortium of percussionists and friends organised by Svet Stoyanov, *Idle Fancies* gives Michigan State University's Dease an opportunity, with Adam Abeshouse's exquisite recording, to illuminate the music's linear pitches and timbres with the marimba's glow, which functions almost as a physical aura. Getting

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INTERNATIONAL RECORD REVIEW

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Shreyna Patel conducts the Portara Ensemble and ALIAS Chamber Ensemble on a new disc of music by Paul Moravec

the volume right is critical to getting the most out of these Mozartian studies. I imagine watching a marimbist doing all of this would be very cool.

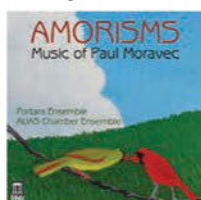
Dease also brings magic to *Three Moves*, which haunts where *Fancies* startles. Its middle movement, 'Turn', begins like a sad Schubert song; the last, 'Slide', is rich in gurgling harmonies. 'This very difficult piece,' Lansky writes, 'has become a rite-of-passage for dozens of young marimba players'. Its dedicatee, Nancy Zeltsman, devotes a chapter of her book on four-mallet marimba to this work. *Spirals*, written in 2013 for Lin Chin Cheng, trips out on chromatic descending harmonies with admirably industrious art but less fantasy.

Laurence Vittes

Moravec

Amorisms. *Sacred Love Songs*. *Tempest Fantasy*
Portara Ensemble; ALIAS Chamber Ensemble /
Shreya Patel

Delos © DE3470 (62' • DDD • T)



Paul Moravec won the 2004 Pulitzer Prize in Music for his *Tempest Fantasy*, which takes up

the middle portion of this new recording by the ALIAS Chamber Ensemble and Portara Ensemble, instrumental and choral groups respectively, both resident in Nashville. But it's clear the American composer hasn't rested on any laurels since the big honour: the two other pieces here are as enchanting as Moravec's evocation of his favourite Shakespeare play.

The Bard is also the impetus behind *Amorisms* (2014), five pieces for chorus, clarinet and string quartet based on Shakespearean aphorisms about love. Moravec composed the work for Nashville Ballet, and its lilting and lyrical music must be ideal for dance. The collection also moves beautifully when standing still, revealing Moravec's ability to animate the texts through deeply poetic writing and delicate dabs of colour. The *Sacred Love Songs* (2012) are equally affecting; the five movements include three with texts from the Bible, one set to 'A Prayer of St Francis', and an instrumental interlude.

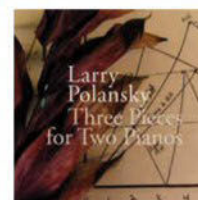
Moravec summons characters, speeches and atmospheres from *The Tempest* in his Pulitzer Prize-winner, which is scored for violin, cello, clarinet and piano. Ariel, Prospero and Caliban are depicted in music of vivid personality. Silken textures abound in Moravec's glistening sound world.

The capital of Tennessee is known as 'Music City' for its central place in country music but this recording exemplifies Nashville's artistic excellence in the concert realm. The ALIAS and Portara ensembles perform with exceptional attention to phrasing and motion as they send Moravec's music into radiant orbit. **Donald Rosenberg**

Polansky

Three Pieces for Two Pianos^a. *Old Paint*^b. *k-toods*^c. *Dismission (pianotood)*^d. *Dismission (pianotood 2)*^d

^aAmy Beal, ^bTobin Chodos, ^bRory Cowal, ^aJoseph Kubera, ^aMarilyn Nonken, ⁱIttai Rosenbaum pfs
New World © NW80777-2 (60' • DDD)



It may take a while to get used to the pace of the far sonic universe traversed by Larry

Polansky's impassive 33-minute *Three Pieces for Two Pianos*, in which, seemingly through the stretching of time, late Beethoven and entirely non-derivative but familial 21st-century vibrations seem destined to creep in. Once there, however, the results are subtly immediate and rewarding, if slow-moving and introspectively dimensional.



"The wonder of Wang: pianist Xiayin Wang may look fragrantly feminine but is a steely-fingered virtuoso of the old school, and she plays the Second exactly as Tchaikovsky intended. And it's well worth hearing... the Royal Scottish National Orchestra sound equally well under music director Peter Oundjian.



--David Mellor, *The Daily Mail*
March 23, 2016

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Written for Joseph Kubera and Sarah Cahill, and played here by Kubera and Marilyn Nonken with great control and command, the *Three Pieces* move procedurally along their glacial and (mostly) algorithmically generated lines, coming to exquisite and eventually orgasmic life in the 17-minute third movement. For something entirely different, try the 15 minutes of fancifully named, delightfully cartoonish *k-toods*, reflecting Polansky's 'experiences and musings' as a father, sequenced between a deconstructionist take on Ruth Crawford Seeger's piano arrangement of the traditional American cowboy song 'I ride an old paint' and two concluding, inspirational *pianotoods* inspired by American Shaker and Lutheran hymns.

While the playing by all six pianists involved in this enterprise is outstanding, Tobin Chodos and Ittai Rosenbaum steal the show with their enthusiastic handling of the five *k-toods*, in particular 'one thing at a time', which has a endearingly nerd-like, hypnotic energy. Ironically perhaps, in light of the mathematical processes Polansky employs, the net effect of what Michael Winter describes in his booklet-notes as the composer's 'constant re-examining, questioning, reformulating, and mixing of ideas' is of thoughtful musical poetry that sounds written by a very human hand.

Laurence Vittes

Poulenc

Intermède. Thème varié. Trois Mouvements perpétuels. Valse-improvisation sur le nom de BACH. Fifteen Improvisations. Badinage. Mélancolie. Trois Pièces

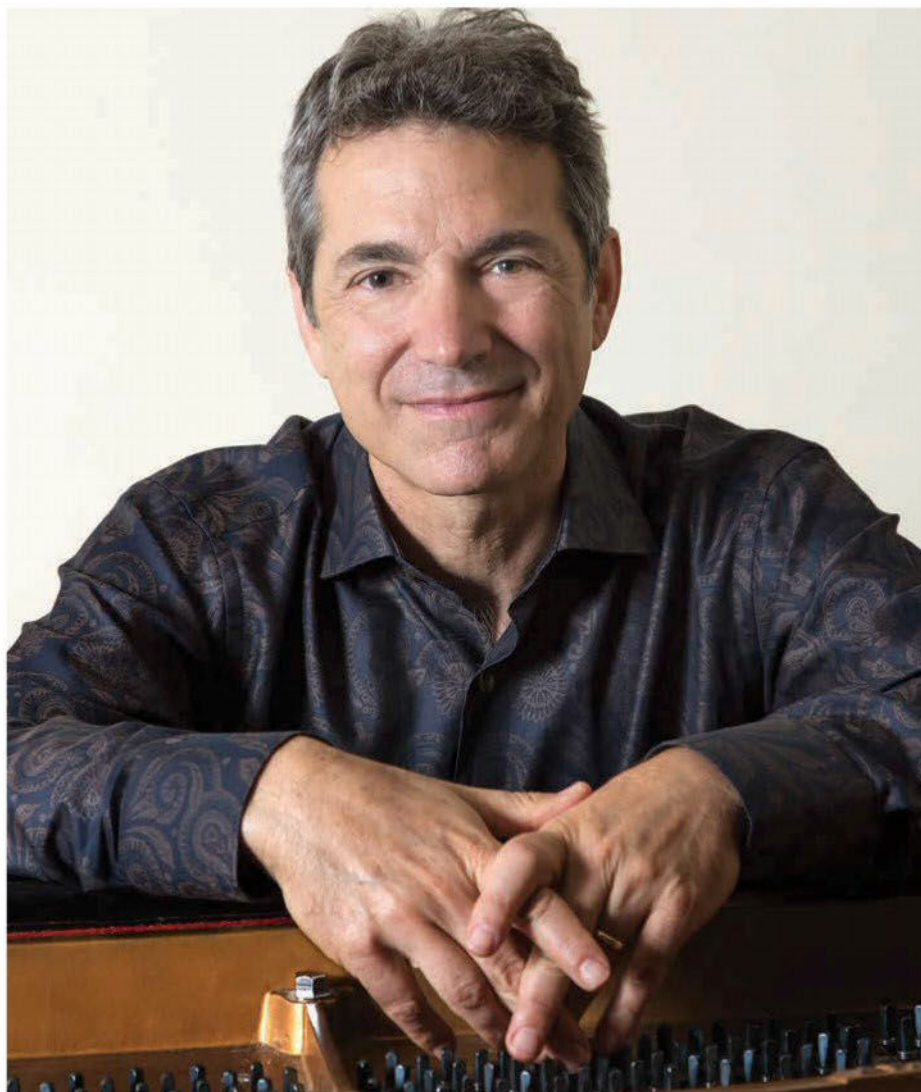
Aleck Karis *pf*

Bridge © BRIDGE9459 (64' • DDD)



My colleague Bryce Morrison aptly described Poulenc's piano music as having 'a sweet and intense or sharp and acidulous fragrance'. Representing a good cross-section of Poulenc's creative life, Aleck Karis's excellently programmed recital addresses these paradoxical qualities, albeit with variable success.

He heightens the contrasts between the *Intermède*'s opening unison octaves and droll march-like sequences, as well as the oddly contrasting chorale sections that bookend the whimsically dancing central episode of the 'Hymne'. The almost Scriabin-esque 'Pastorale' that precedes this 'Hymne' in the *Trois Pièces* (1918-28) benefits from Karis's



Aleck Karis brings 'intelligence and integrity' to Poulenc's piano works

steady gait and the same intense, bass-orientated vantage point that gives him the edge over Charles Owen's comparably touching reading of the *Hommage à Edith Piaf* (Somm, 6/04). This piece concludes the group of *Fifteen Improvisations* (1933-59) at the heart of Karis's programme, where the pianist is consistently clear and contentious. Still, Gabriel Tacchino's generally faster tempi and lighter touch make these miniatures and the wonderful 1951 *Thème varié* truly sparkle (EMI/Warner/Erato).

By taking the *Valse-improvisation sur le nom de BACH* deliberately, Karis allows the slithering counterpoint more room to breathe, although Tacchino's flippantly faster rendition scores points for irony. If Tacchino's brisker, brasher and more dynamic *Trois Mouvements perpétuels* makes other recordings sound elephantine by comparison, you have to admire Karis for giving every note and every rhythmic nicety its due with minimum help from Poulenc's

beloved sustain pedal. And Karis's full-bodied traversal of *Mélancolie* also stands out for his impeccably controlled trills. The intelligence and integrity that typify Karis's pianism also apply to his insightful booklet annotations. **Jed Distler**

Scriabin

Etude, Op 2 No 1. Two Impromptus, Op 14. Three Pieces, Op 45. Two Pieces, Op 57. Poème, Op 32 No 1. Preludes - Op 2 No 2; Op 11

Klara Min *pf*

Steinway & Sons © STNS30045 (63' • DDD)



Collectors familiar with Klara Min's stretched-out, compulsively detailed Chopin Mazurkas (Delos) will find her Scriabin less idiosyncratic, yet ripe with subjectivity and colourful nuance. Although

Cyprien Katsaris may well be the most dazzling and innovative of all living virtuosos.

A unique voice, serious, provocative, mischievous and compelling, a vivid and extraordinary example of recreative genius.

Bryce Morrison - Gramophone



P21 051-N

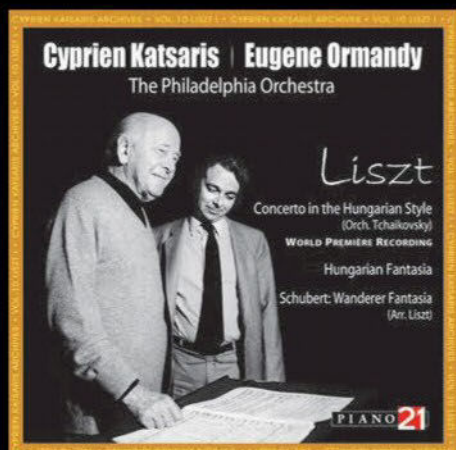
Beethoven: Concerto No. 5 "Emperor"

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Bruce Reader - theclassicalreviewer.co.uk

The playing from Katsaris is nothing short of phenomenal!

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Katrin Hagen



Pianist Klara Min offers a mixed Scriabin programme on her new disc on Steinway & Sons

Min employs liberal tempo fluctuation, her strong melodic declamation and gift for generating harmonic tension and release prevent the interpretations from losing shape and focus.

These qualities particularly reveal themselves via comparative listening. For example, in the Op 11 Preludes, Piers Lane (Hyperion, 5/01) favours steadier overall tempi and makes expressive points primarily through touch, while Min might linger on a cadence, lean into a juicy modulation (as in Prelude No 3) or give an extra nudge or two to the bass-lines (No 6). In No 7, Min's attention to the composer's asymmetric left-hand patterns reveals a darker side to a piece that most pianists cheerfully toss off, while No 16's unison lines inspired by Chopin's 'Funeral March' twist, turn and brood, guided by unpredictable accents.

In the slight and conversational 'Feuillet d'album', Op 45 No 1, Min draws out the ends of each animated phrase as if she wanted to capture these moments in a kind of freeze-frame shot. On the other hand, tapered phrases lend a generic air to the C sharp minor Etude, Op 2 No 1, in contrast to the mesmerising long legato lines of Dmitri Alexeev's stunning recent version (Brilliant, 12/15). If the Op 32 No 1 *Poème* oozes by with little textural differentiation, Min compensates with her quizzically lithe

and transparent readings of the little Op 57 pieces ('Désir' and 'Caresse dansé'). In short, Min's finest performances on this gorgeously engineered release will make Scriabin fans sit up and take notice.

Jed Distler

'Rojak Rocks'

J Gale Three Pieces^a **B Lynn** Ba-Dee-Doo-Dup^b

Raph Rock **W Ross** Trombone Concerto No 2^c

Sacco Trombone Sonata^d

John D Rojak *bass tbn*^b **Andy Malloy**, ^b**James Miller** *ten tbn*^a **Russ Kasso**ff, ^d**Antoinette Perry** *pf*^a **Joe**

Bongiorno *db*^a **Ray Marchica** *drums*^c **New York Chamber Symphony Orchestra** / **Gerard Schwarz**

Navona © NV6019 (62' • DDD)



The centrepiece of NYC trombonist John D Rojak's debut Navona CD is undoubtedly Walter Ross's powerful, long-limbed 25-minute Trombone Concerto No 2. Consciously using Beethoven as a symphonic model while flaunting the fluency of a Hindemith and the lyrical punch of a Copland, it's like experiencing a parallel universe in which trombones are the coolest solo instruments.

Cool comes with Rojak's Big Apple territory: he's played in classical orchestras, big bands, Broadway shows, jingles and other freelance recording sessions including gigs in Brooklyn at 1am, 'walking home afterward past burning trash cans in abandoned buildings'. It's appropriate therefore that Rojak's debut release features 'classical pieces that have an element of jazz or commercial music' infused with the gritty elegance of the street.

The sophisticated, easy-listening stylings of Jack Gale's Three Pieces for bass trombone and jazz rhythm section start off the proceedings. Steven Christopher Sacco's Sonata for bass trombone and piano meanders introspectively for 15 minutes, beautifully backed by Antoinette Perry. Brian Lynn's naughty and nice *Ba-Dee-Doo-Dup*, five little character pieces written for the trombone section of Scottish Opera around 1980, is played with dash, panache and addictive high humour in an audiophile session engineered by LA Philharmonic trombonist Sonny Ausman.

For the last 2'44" Rojak plays Alan Raph's *Rock* for solo trombone in the natural red-rock beauty of Hunter Canyon in Moab, Utah, recorded 150 feet above the canyon floor in order 'to capture the natural echo of the landscape'. **Laurence Vittes**

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Pictured: Jonas Kaufmann (© Sony Classical/Julian Hargreaves/Nessun Dorma – The Puccini Album 2015) who featured on the July 2015 cover of Gramophone. Full annual retail price for print only (13 issues) is £74.75; print only annual subscription, Digital Edition and reviews Database (£62); Digital Club (£82); Gramophone Club (£103). postage and packaging is not included for overseas orders. if you have a subscription enquiry then please email subscriptions@markallengroup.com

Let us celebrate the many ways that we listen

It's proving to be a passionate debate. Evidence and emotion play equal roles, and each side is convinced they are right. No, not the UK Referendum on the EU...but vinyl records.

When I ponder it, it does seem quite extraordinary that, in 2016, we should be illustrating the front cover of *Gramophone* with an LP. For many of you, vinyl will of course have played a substantial role in your collecting lives. It's quite possibly the format which best evokes those heady early days of discovery as you began exploring classical music. But it's now so long since LPs were superseded by CDs that there will be many who might never actually have owned a turntable – and I count myself among that number.

But while I can't therefore share the emotional connection to vinyl, I *can* share, and understand, the depth of relationship with recorded music that underpins the debate. In his fascinating feature, Andrew Mellor talks to a breadth of interviewees who reflect the many reasons why vinyl has once again grabbed the popular imagination: its distinctive sound qualities, the ritual, the artwork, the permanence, the business potential, the counter-cultural appeal... Whatever happens, whether it proves to be a trend or merely trendy, the renewed appeal of vinyl touches on so many issues about how we relate to recorded music, and is thus deserving of in-depth discussion.

And it's important we *do* discuss it. For as a magazine and readership which takes listening very seriously, we all know the impact the quality of sound, whether via LP, CD or digital file, can have. But we must never forget that it's still the means



to an end, not the end itself, and that extraordinary musical experiences can still be had when the sound, or method of playback, is less than optimal. After all, that's something our reviews of historic recordings, some from the early 20th century (and however skillful the re-mastering) prove month after month.

I sometimes hear quite sniffy opinions expressed about people listening to music via smartphones whilst out and about. And, despite the very high quality streams now available, such listening conditions are of course far from ideal – but it might be the only listening time a person has. They might be a seasoned collector (they might even be you). Or they might be someone who, while commuting on a train, or out jogging, is choosing, or chancing upon, classical music for the very first time. It may be the beginning of *their* heady journey of discovery – the one so indelibly linked for many of you with memories of vinyl. And who'd want to do anything other than encourage that?

Likewise, I worry that discussion around new concert hall plans can occasionally give out unhelpful messages. While there is something extraordinary about a state-of-the-art auditorium, we've all experienced brilliant concerts in less than perfect venues. To imply otherwise doesn't send the most encouraging signal to new people to give a concert a try.

So while celebrating the sonic summit of high-end listening, vinyl or virtual, let us always remember that the climb there, even the foothills, can be full of life-changing experiences. Let us celebrate and advocate all methods of listening. After all, it's the music that matters. martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'As a child of the compact disc era, I find almost everything about vinyl both troublesome and fascinating.'

admits **ANDREW MELLOR**, who writes this month's cover story on the resurgence of this older listening form. 'Vinyl has proved itself more a phenomenon than a format – and it clearly isn't going away.'



'Frederica von Stade's career almost exactly encompasses my years as an opera-goer,' says **DAVID PATRICK**

STEARNS, author of this month's Icons. 'Revisiting her early recordings with more seasoned ears revealed one of the most beautifully integrated voices out there. None have such a natural and distinctive personality.'



HARRIET SMITH has enjoyed listening to some 'terrific' CDs from Champs Hill in the past, so was keen to visit the venue

where the recordings take place. 'It was intriguing to meet the philanthropists behind it in preparation for my *Gramophone* feature,' she says. 'Their enthusiasm and determination to help young artists was truly inspiring.'

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AN ELEVEN NIGHT HOLIDAY | 31 OCTOBER 2016

Harwich – Vigo (for Santiago de Compostela) – Casablanca (for Rabat) – Cádiz – Lisbon – Oporto – Harwich
with The Gould Piano Trio; David Adams, violin & viola; Robert Plane, clarinet; Alec Frank-Gemmill, Principal Horn of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Susana Gaspar, soprano



Sailing from Harwich, two days will be spent on board the Black Watch to give everyone a chance to explore the ship and enjoy two full days of music, talks and interviews with the musicians. Our first landfall will be Vigo, Galicia on the north-west corner of the Iberian peninsula. Vigo is a dynamic and attractive city, close to Santiago de Compostela, the final destination for so many pilgrims over the years. Our next stop is Casablanca, a bustling and cosmopolitan metropolis with much colonial architecture. An optional excursion to Rabat will be available. We visit Cadiz and its old town and from here it's just a short drive to Jerez de la Frontera, the centre of the sherry trade which will be the destination for another optional excursion. A day will be spent in the Portuguese capital with time to discover its historic neighbourhoods, the regal resort of Sintra high in the hills above the city and Lisbon's intricate Manueline architecture. Our final port of call is Portugal's second city, Oporto the centre of the port wine trade and dramatically set on both banks of the River Douro.

Price from £1,845 per person for eleven nights including all concerts, talks and interviews, full board throughout and two private drinks parties.

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With three exclusive concerts given by the Navarra String Quartet

Sailing overnight from Tilbury our first destination is Bruges, one of the most perfect mediaeval cityscapes in Europe and a far cry from the scurrying nuns and gloomy convents of Korngold's 'Die Tote Stadt.' We will explore mediaeval churches along the canals, the Groeninge Museum with its works by Van Eyck and Hans Memling, and The Church of our Lady with Michelangelo's Madonna and Child. After a full day at sea, we arrive in Hamburg, where we will visit the newly renovated Kunsthalle, one of Germany's most important art collections, including Old Masters and German Romantics. We also see the house where Brahms lived and there will be a piano recital on the instrument used by Brahms himself. Approaching Amsterdam along the North Sea Canal, we will be looking forward to the splendidly renovated Rijksmuseum, as well as optional excursions to the Concertgebouw and the Van Gogh Museum.



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GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



ELGAR

Symphony No 1
Staatskapelle Berlin /
Daniel Barenboim
Decca
► **EDWARD SECKERSON'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 24**

This is a hugely impressive Elgar recording, Daniel Barenboim brilliantly controlling and conveying all the themes, drama, turmoil and composure of this great symphony.



GRIEG. TCHAIKOVSKY
Piano Concertos
Denis Kozhukhin *pf*
Berlin RSO /
Vassily Sinaisky
Pentatone

A concerto debut disc pairing such major works? Bold, but entirely justified by two superb performances from this Queen Elisabeth Competition first prize winner.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 32**



IBERT Orchestral Works
Suisse Romande
Orchestra / Neeme Järvi
Chandos
Neeme Järvi and his excellent players

offer us elegant performances of the French composer's two best-known works, along with lesser-known pieces all adding a rich sense of context.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 35**



KHACHATURIAN. TCHAIKOVSKY
Piano Concertos
Xiayin Wang *pf*
RSNO / Peter Oundjian
Chandos

Another super Chandos disc from pianist Xiayin Wang, who in both works is, argues critic Jeremy Nicholas, 'up with the very best'. High praise indeed!

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 37**



ADAMS. JS BACH. MESSIAEN Visions
Christina &
Michelle Naughton *pfs*
Warner Classics
From the formidable

intensity of Messiaen's *Visions de l'Amen* to the sprightly grace of Adams's *Hallelujah Junction*, these pianist twins demonstrate remarkable virtuosity and rapport.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 46**



MOZART Violin Sonatas
Alina Ibragimova *vn*
Cédric Tiberghien *pf*
Hyperion
No stranger to the

Editor's Choice page, Alina Ibragimova is one of the most consistently compelling violinists of her generation, while Cédric Tiberghien proves every bit the perfect partner here.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 50**



SCHUBERT
String Quintet. Lieder
Matthias Goerne *bar*
Ebène Quartet with
Gautier Capuçon *vc*
Erato

The Quintet is elegant and eloquent, as you'd expect from the acclaimed personnel involved, while the Lieder make for a rounded Schubert exploration.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 52**



'IMITATIO'
Ricercar Consort
Mirare
'Immediacy of sound and infectious zest' – words by

our critic Fabrice Fitch, and ones which perfectly capture this delightful disc of 'representative' music by Biber and some of his contemporaries.

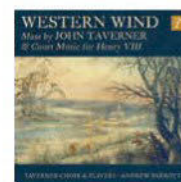
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 54**



'IN MEMORIAM'
The Choir of King's
College London /
Gareth Wilson
Delphian

A programme of Renaissance works and contemporary commissions in a moving tribute from David Trendell's choir to the choral conductor who died in 2014.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 78**



'WESTERN WIND'
Taverner Choir & Players
/ Andrew Parrott
Avie

A fascinating, thoughtfully curated and, most importantly, beautifully performed portrait of music-making in the time of Henry VIII, woven around the music of John Taverner.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 81**



DVD/BLU-RAY
MASCAGNI *Cavalleria rusticana*
LEONCAVALLO *Pagliacci*
Sols incl Kaufmann; Dresden State Opera /
Christian Thielemann
Sony Classical

Jonas Kaufmann's portrayal of these roles (debuts in both) is built on both vocal excellence and strong dramatic presence.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 91**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE
BEETHOVEN
Piano Concertos
Wilhelm Kempff *pf*
APR

Just one of two deserving issues this month from APR exploring the art of Wilhelm Kempff.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 62**



Listen to many of the Editor's Choice recordings online at **gobuz.com**

FOR THE RECORD



Watch wherever you are: Barenboim conducts the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra at the BBC Proms

BBC Proms to focus on Latin America as 2016 programme is announced

The 2016 BBC Proms season has been announced. With 75 Proms in the Royal Albert Hall, 76 Proms Extra events and eight Chamber Music Proms at Cadogan Hall, the festival runs from July 15 to the Last Night on September 10.

This year there will be a special focus on the cello, with 10 concertos receiving performances, including Elgar's on the First Night (Sol Gabetta with the BBC SO and Sakari Oramo), Alban Gerhardt in the Dvořák Concerto with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Charles Dutoit on August 3, and the world premiere of Huw Watkins's Concerto with his brother Paul the soloist alongside the BBC NOW and conductor Thomas Søndergård on August 12.

The 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death will be commemorated in a series of concerts featuring music inspired by his plays. Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique will perform Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette* on July 30, while Hans Abrahamsen's *let me tell you* (which features a libretto by Paul Griffiths based on the character of Ophelia from *Hamlet*) will be performed by soprano Barbara Hannigan with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and their new Music Director

Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla on August 27. Hannigan's recording of this work with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Andris Nelsons was an Editor's Choice in the March issue.

This year the Olympics take place in Brazil, so a particular focus of this year's Proms festival will be on music from Latin America. Works by Villa-Lobos and Ginastera will be prominently featured and there will be visits from the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra and pianist Gabriela Montero (August 24), Martha Argerich will be performing Liszt's First Piano Concerto (August 17), and Juan Diego Flórez will be the star soloist for the Last Night festivities.

As in previous years, every Prom will be broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 (available on digital radio, via TV, mobile, laptop and tablet, as well as on 90-93FM) and will be available online for 30 days at bbc.co.uk/proms. There will also be TV broadcasts on Friday and Sunday on BBC Four throughout the season as well as the return of *Proms Extra*, the weekly magazine show hosted by Katie Derham every Saturday night on BBC Two. These radio and TV broadcasts will also be available for download via the iPlayer Radio app and the BBC iPlayer.

Royal Philharmonic Society unveils its 2016 Awards shortlist

The Royal Philharmonic Society has unveiled the shortlist of contenders for its annual Awards, given in recognition of achievement in live music-making, and in education and outreach work.

Several of the categories look to be particularly hard-fought between artists regularly praised for their achievements on record in *Gramophone's* pages. Pianists Daniil Trifonov and Maria João Pires and violinist Christian Tetzlaff make for a very strong Instrumentalist shortlist; singers Iestyn Davies, Andrew Watts and Roderick Williams are competing for the Singer category; while Sakari Oramo, Vasily Petrenko and Mark Wigglesworth (see below) are in the Conductor shortlist. The winners will be announced at a ceremony in London on May 10, and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 the following day at 7.30pm.

ENO reaches settlement with Equity as the MD resigns

When English National Opera's Arts Council England funding was cut by £5m (or 15 per cent) in 2014 it set in motion a turbulent period for the company. In early 2015 a series of management crises led to ENO being placed in special measures by ACE and removed from the national portfolio of arts organisations given regular funding.

In a bid to cut costs, ENO's board moved to change the ENO Chorus from a full-time to a part-time group, which led to a dispute in which the chorus threatened strike action. ENO reached a settlement with Equity in March which will see the chorus move from full-time to nine-month contracts, and a reduction in their numbers from 44 to 40.

Days after this settlement was announced, Mark Wigglesworth resigned from his role as Music Director. In a brief letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, Wigglesworth stated: 'My own view is that a full-time, experienced, committed workforce, across the entire company, is a more valuable use of ENO's public subsidy.'

Gloucester Cathedral to admit girl choristers for the first time

Gloucester Cathedral has become the latest choral establishment to welcome girl choristers into its choir stalls. The



Girl choristers are to sing at Gloucester Cathedral

girls will begin rehearsing in September and will then sing at Evensong each Monday from October, as well as at Christmas and Easter services. They will, says the Cathedral, play 'a full part in the Cathedral's musical worship'.

The past 25 years have seen a significant growth in traditional choral foundations welcoming girl choristers, beginning in the early 1990s with Salisbury and Wells. In 2008 St Catharine's College, Cambridge, became the UK's first college-based girls' choir.

Pappano extends his contract as ROH announces new season

Sir Antonio Pappano has extended his contract as Music Director of the Royal Opera House until 2020, which will see him become the longest-serving MD in the company's history.

The 2016/17 Covent Garden season will include role debuts from Jonas Kaufmann and Anna Netrebko in new productions of *Otello* and *Norma*.

Susanna Mälkki named Principal Guest Conductor of the LA Phil

Susanna Mälkki has signed a three-year contract with the Los Angeles Philharmonic (commencing in 2017) that will see her become only the third Principal Guest Conductor in the orchestra's history (following Michael Tilson Thomas and Sir Simon Rattle).

Music Director Gustavo Dudamel said: 'The orchestra loves and trusts her. It is wonderful to have such a vibrant artist as our Principal Guest.'

Accordionist Ksenija Sidorova signs to Deutsche Grammophon

Accordionist Ksenija Sidorova has signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon. Her debut album on the label – due for release on June 3 – is described as a 'fresh vision of *Carmen*', drawing on Latin, Asian, European and North American musical styles to explore Bizet's opera. 'Carmen fascinates me,' Sidorova said. 'Of course I wanted to bring something new to this music, to let Carmen speak with a different voice. The accordion doesn't have to breathe like a singer, so there are no restrictions to what I can do with this music. I could be daring and passionate, just like Carmen, and share in the multicultural musical ideas created by my wonderful collaborators.'

Sidorova has already made two recordings for the Champs Hill label, both well-received in *Gramophone's* pages: 'Classical Accordion' (A/11) ranged from Bach to Berio, and the more recent 'Fairy Tales' (9/13) included the Accordion Concerto of the same name by Czech composer Václav Trojan. She has also appeared as guest on discs on Decca including Juan Diego Flórez's 'Italia' recital album and Nicola Benedetti's 'The Silver Violin', while regular collaborators include guitarist Miloš Karadaglić and mandolin player Avi Avital.

Accordion star: Ksenija Sidorova signs for DG



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NEW PODCAST

Gramophone's Editor-in-Chief James Jolly speaks to Chinese pianist Yundi (pictured) about his new recording of Chopin's *Berceuse*, Op 57, the four *Ballades* and the Op 17 *Mazurkas* for Deutsche Grammophon.



MEETING MENUHIN

In an exclusive article for *Gramophone's* website, we publish an interview from 1980 by cellist and Principal of the Birmingham Conservatoire Julian Lloyd Webber with Yehudi Menuhin, whose centenary is being celebrated this year.

REVIEWS DATABASE

Featuring more than 30,000 *Gramophone* reviews in a fully searchable database complete with comparative recordings, links to retailers and full recording details, this database is the ultimate resource for anyone interested in classical music recordings.

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The vinyl REVOLUTION

They may be heavy, oversized, expensive to make and extortionate to ship, but records are selling – and to a growing audience. But what's the appeal of this retro form, and will it eventually outsell the CD? Andrew Mellor investigates

Drive east into the wilderness from Santa Fe, and after about two hours you might spot an elliptical pattern of circles and diamonds etched into the New Mexico desert floor. It's the logo of the Church of Spiritual Technology, a branch of the Scientology movement. Somewhere deep beneath that spot is a set of steel-lined tunnels housing thousands of titanium records, each preserving the voice of L Ron Hubbard, Scientology's founder. The records can only be played, apparently, using a specially designed, solar-powered turntable. In the event of a global holocaust, new or surviving species are invited to consult the pictorial instructions, set the turntable in motion, and get a gratis crash-course in Scientology, courtesy of its legendary patriarch.

As underlined in Greg Milner's penetrating history of recording, *Perfecting Sound Forever*, the Scientologists are on to something with their New Mexico record library, whether or not you subscribe to the beliefs their records espouse. Perhaps they know that with digital music we have, in one sense, been sold a myth: that digital files aren't only (more often than not) subjected to the worst kinds of compression, but that they're also, as this magazine's Audio section has explored, impermanent – even more susceptible to decay and disappearance than magnetic tape. That's before you've considered the availability of the specific technology needed to 'access' those files, whether they're floating on a screen or embedded with the plastic of a compact disc. If you want to make a recording that you'll be able to hear long after the earth's scorching, cut it onto a record and bury it deep underground.

However much importance you might attach to the idea of physical permanence, it's worth stopping for a moment to consider the tenacity of the humble old record and its technology rooted in Edison. Who would have thought, when the digital revolution took hold over a decade ago, that the music industry would soon be looking hopefully in the direction

For the past seven years, vinyl is the only physical format that has seen consistent growth in sales across all genres



Back to where we started: customers listen to LPs on headphones in 1956

of the long-lost LP? For the past seven years, vinyl is the only physical format that has seen consistent growth in sales across all genres. That's right, vinyl records: heavy, oversized, expensive to warehouse, extortionate to ship, but somehow unerringly appealing – objects of desire and promise that have stirred feelings of collective optimism in the belly of an industry eager to recapture the good old days.

When Milner's book was published in 2009, this growth in vinyl sales was in its infancy. Milner was able to refer affectionately to today's analogue music lovers as 'a crowd forced on to a reservation, speaking a dying language... on the wrong side of history and proud of it.' But before we rejoice in that crowd's emancipation, it's worth checking on the statistics. Of all the music sold in 2014, 1.5 per cent was on vinyl, which means the format still hasn't recouped its market share of two decades before – which was 1.6 per cent (the figures for classical music in isolation aren't available, though experts predict the percentage would be even smaller). What's got record labels so excited isn't necessarily that percentage figure, but the fact that it's moving – and in an upward direction. Most labels haven't seen growth like that for years.

All three classical 'majors', along with a small gaggle of independents, are steadily releasing vinyl right now. And that's despite significantly higher manufacturing costs (against manufacturing costs of a little over zero for digital music). Sony Classical took the extraordinary step of launching its new cycle of Mozart's Da Ponte operas on the format; quite a way to announce one's return to a niche market. Last October, Warner Classics' Erato imprint released Alexandre Tharaud's recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* on LP. As of 2012, Linn Records has channelled between two and four of its yearly headline classical releases onto vinyl – recordings from John Butt, Robin Ticciati and Kuniko – as a counterpoint to digital releases, physical and virtual. The Universal labels started to offer samples of their reissue box-sets on vinyl a little over two years ago, and now release single-disc reissues and frontline new recordings on the format as well. Linn's equipment arm, meanwhile, shipped 70 per cent more new turntables in 2015 than it did in 2012.

When Universal re-entered the market via a slimmed-down, six-LP edition of its 53-disc Decca Sound CD set in 2013, it was, in the words of the company's Vice President for Classical Catalogue Barry Holden, 'to dip our toes in the water'. If the water wasn't exactly hot, it was at least lukewarm. 'We made 2000 sets, which doesn't sound like much – actually, it isn't that much – but over the course of a year they seemed to all filter out through our retail channels. So we tried it again with our Mercury Living Presence box – Mercury being a cult label and originally a vinyl label. And that set did even better. When I say even better, I mean no more than 3000 sets for the whole world.'

For once, the headline numbers might not be the most important, which is why Holden qualifies his statement.

Universal can make its vinyl reissues schedule work because a high manufacturing spend is offset by low design, editorial and royalty costs. For box-sets already issued on CD – or for classic albums, many from the so-called 'TAS List' (compiled by the US-based audiophile magazine *The Absolute Sound*) of the finest sound recordings, reissued with original artwork and liner notes – there's no new editorial to pay for and minimal mechanical rights to negotiate with Universal's individual copyright-owning labels. 'That made it easier to justify,' says Holden, 'but there was no question that it was a bit of a risk.'

'Vinyl seems to appeal to wealthy people aged 40 plus. Some of them are returning to vinyl and some are establishing a first relationship with it' – Barry Holden, Universal

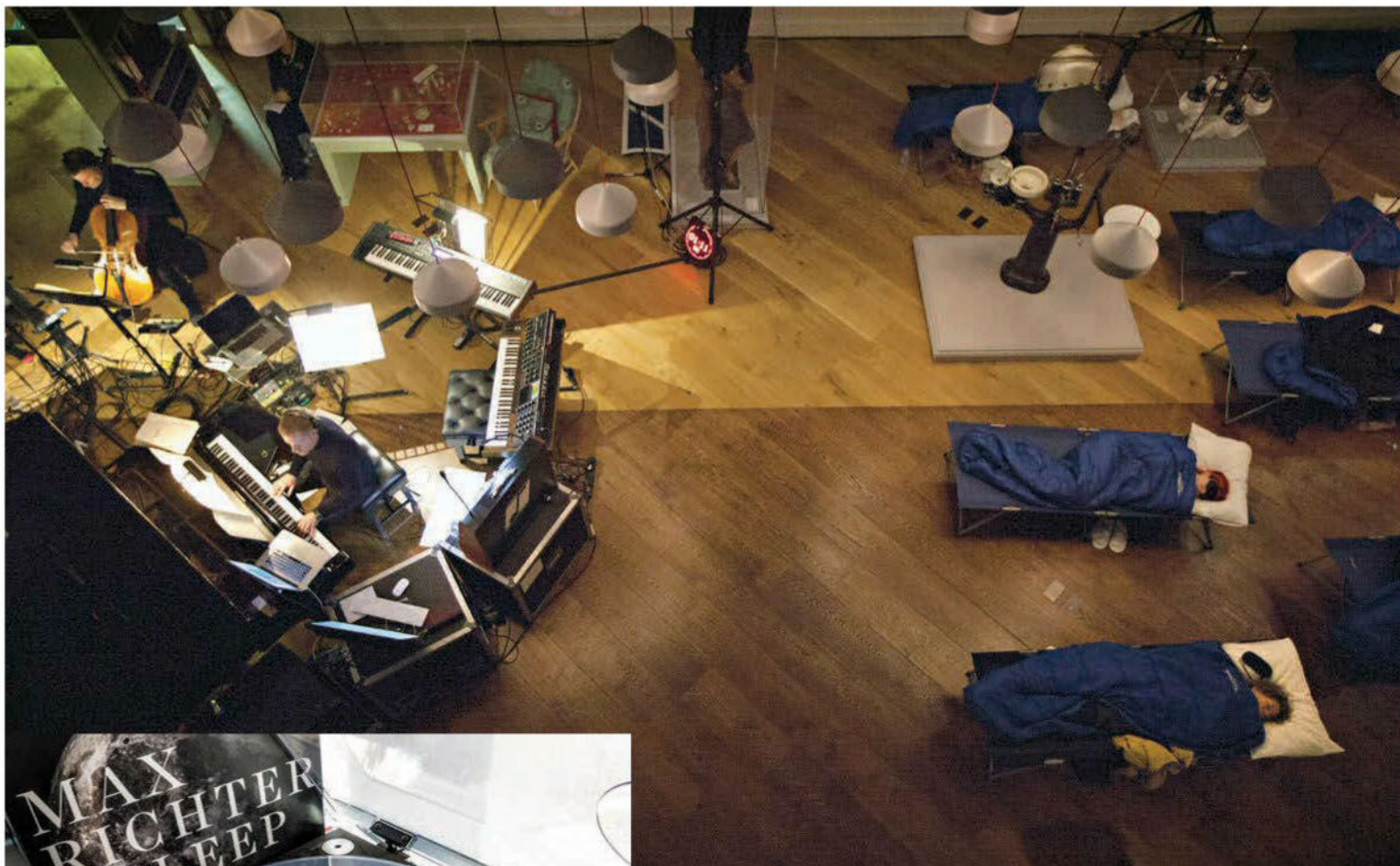
It still is. 'If you can smell from the look on my face that we're still tentative about it, then we are,' says Holden. 'Vinyl is a significant and useful niche but it's still a niche. In terms of subsidiary costs like shipping and storage, it gets quite an easy ride through Universal's systems. Having said that, I'm pleased to have it. If vinyl adds 1 or 2 per cent to our revenue without losing money and without the company rearing up in revolt, then we'll do it. It's not going to reshape our business but we'll support it as long as it supports itself.'

The question, then, is who's buying it? 'We just don't know,' says Holden. 'All we have is anecdotal evidence, things we gather from Amazon reviews and the like. Our gut tells us that it's very market-specific; that there are significant pockets of interest in Asia, Japan, China, Hong Kong, the US and Germany; France and the UK to a lesser extent. Anecdotally, it seems to appeal to wealthy people aged 40 plus. Some of them are returning to vinyl and some are establishing a first relationship with it.'

Snapshot data from Linn Records echoes that perceived geographical trend. And like Universal, Linn has recognised that if the market is small, at least it's reliable. Typically, a vinyl record on Linn will account for 5 per cent or less of an album's total sales across all formats. 'That may be small, but we do limited pressings and it's a fairly set group that responds,' says Linn's Kim Campbell. 'We're talking about an older demographic, people who loved vinyl in its heyday and are rejoicing that it's coming back.' There's little evidence to suggest that the hordes of youngsters buying LPs from Tesco



Strong sales of the LP edition of 'Decca Sound' heralded the resurgence of vinyl



The in-the-moment quality of Max Richter's 'Sleep' proved perfect for LP release

and Urban Outfitters are impacting the classical market; format trumping musical content remains the preserve of a tiny sliver of audiophiles who are as happy listening to Beethoven as they are comparing recordings of train whistles.

Remarkable as it might seem, there are still those rare occasions for which the industry is willing to put ideology before profit. When the British-German composer Max Richter signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon in 2014, it was on the condition that albums of his works were released on vinyl: DG was effectively forced into pressing its first frontline (as opposed to reissue) vinyl material in years through artist will rather than market strategy.

Richter's feelings about the format echo those of many self-confessed analogue music enthusiasts, but they also hit upon some of the most vital opinions tapped into by Milner in his book: that digital-capturing techniques like Pro Tools have sucked as much life from the process of recording as they have from the results in playback. But what he and the vinyl lovers

'We have this collective memory of what vinyl sounds like and we associate it with the great music of the past' – Max Richter

miss most from our brave new digital world is 'presence' – the elusive sonic quality that many claim the CD never managed to bottle. 'There's just something very sterile about a CD – this arid noise that comes out of it,' says Richter. 'I found that very difficult to warm to.' Don't take just his word for it. Milner's book includes multiple erudite opinions straddling both sides of the analogue/digital divide. But perhaps its most fascinating episode is an encounter with the tantalising character that is Dr John Diamond, a pioneer of holistic healing who believes digital music can be held accountable for much of the world's misery, angst and violence.

Diamond's thesis is rooted in science he claims to be able to prove. But when Richter and so many others talk about the 'sound' of analogue music, their language is more romantic. 'We have this collective memory of what vinyl sounds like and we associate it with the great music of the past,' the composer says. 'Many of us will have encountered Mozart, Beethoven, Bach and The Beatles through the medium of vinyl. It has a specific sonic signature and I think that becomes inextricably linked with that repertoire.' You can see why his own work, with its roots in past sounds and its certain wraparound, spatial presence, might have found a natural home in this format. Richter maintains that his vinyl recordings are for core fans who followed him long before he signed to DG. But the Yellow Label is pushing vinyl's emerging 'hipster' factor with

Richter: it recently released excerpts from the composer's work *Sleep* on 180g transparent vinyl, the ultimate in turntable chic.

Encountering opinions like Diamond's and Richter's can set you on quite a path. Particularly if, like me, you came to maturity listening to classical music via digital means. I bought my first turntable after reading Milner's book, and the first record I played on it was Sony's 2014 recording of *Le nozze di Figaro* from Teodor Currentzis. I felt the shock of that 'presence' from a recording made digitally but rendered by a stylus vibrating in a groove. And yes, it does sound different. There's an embracing quality and a certain spatial clarity, despite the sonic limitations that are imposed on the recording to stop the stylus jumping out of the groove (something like MP3 compression, but nowhere near as indiscriminate or bland). The question is: was I hearing the music, or hearing the recording?

It's a longstanding paradox that classical music – strewn with silences, encompassing a wide dynamic range and featuring unending variations in texture and colour – should be linked to a medium as inaccurate, as 'low-fi', as vinyl; a medium in which you hear the mechanism of the reproduction at all times, absolutely *not* as music is heard in the concert hall. While this is fine for Richter's scores with their ambient halo, it's not so good for an Enescu symphony in all its horizontal complexity. As for that mechanical noise, is it the fuzzy course of the needle that we talk of when we describe the 'warmth' of a record's sound? Not if you speak to the people at Linn Records, who claim that their customers are constantly upgrading their systems to mitigate that noise.

I felt compelled to ask Greg Milner, who steers a central course through the choppy analogue-versus-digital waters in his book. 'I've discovered in my own listening that acoustic instruments sound a lot better through analogue means,' he tells me on the phone from his home in New York. 'I don't know what it is, but they just do.' In the final pages of his book, Milner recounts the experience of recording his own voice on a wax cylinder using an 1889 Edison lathe. He makes a powerful observation: that the uneasy feeling many of us experience on hearing our own voice played back through a digital recording – is that *really* how I sound? – has gone.

The arguments around sound quality will spin round and round just like the old acoustic-versus-electrical dialectic that occupied Edison and his competitors. Proponents of digital music will 'prove' scientifically that there's no competition between the two formats while analogue fans will dismiss those experiments as irrelevant, measured against the wrong scales. Meanwhile, the rest of us appear to have moved on; we're talking less of analogue versus digital and more of convenience versus ceremony – an argument in which we appear to want a bit of both, throwing a very precarious light on our old friend the compact disc. 'There's a spectrum here,' says Richter. 'At one end you have high-resolution files, which sound good and are convenient. At the other end, you have the very inconvenient but wonderful-sounding vinyl. And in the middle, you have the CD, which is neither convenient nor wonderful. So the CD is over. Finished.' Milner has a different slant on much the same sentiment: 'If anything, vinyl has more relevance now than the CD does,' he says. 'And that is something I definitely didn't see coming.'

Is that why labels big and small are bending over backwards to nurture the tiny market that is vinyl, with its splendid immunity to the havoc visited upon unit sales by digital downloads and

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Percussionist Kuniko's album 'Counterpoint', featuring music by Steve Reich, is one of a steady stream of digital-to-vinyl releases from independent label Linn Records

streaming? Research from the industry body in Britain, the BPI, colours the picture a little more subtly. Two thirds of music consumers consider themselves 'multi-channellers', says a report from the BPI published in December, meaning that they stream music using the likes of Spotify and Qobuz before buying selected favourite albums on CD or, increasingly, LP. There is a new desire among music fans 'to emotionally engage with the recording and the cover artwork it comes with', it is suggested. The BPI threw its weight behind this perceived new desire when it launched a chart for vinyl sales to coincide with Record Store Day in 2015. But for many of us classical collectors, that 'desire' is anything but new.

The vinyl chart might be little more than a marketing tool, but what looks interesting is the loosely definable 'art music' or 'classic album' make-up of a higher-than-usual proportion of its listings: albums bought by people whom you might presume place a certain value on focused listening. Richter sees the vinyl trend, as a whole, as 'an immune reaction against the virtualisation of art and culture'. As he claims, 'There's something about the haptic quality of holding an object in your hand that embodies and contains the work. We are physical creatures and we can't really get past that.' Sure. But

isn't the size and shape of a CD even more satisfying than that of a cumbersome record?

That might be a controversial statement. But just as the 'original' vinyl lovers have felt the need to rally around their beloved format as it faced extinction in the face of the cassette and CD, so Richter's talk of the demise of the CD can induce feelings of protection in those of us who were ensnared by the art of music in the time just before the CD became mainstream. I'm not sure there's anything immediately more satisfying about a cardboard vinyl sleeve – prone to bending, tearing and scuffing – than there is about beautiful CD artwork, sitting resplendent inside a shiny jewel case. The only physical difference, perhaps, is psychoacoustic: the fact that you see your LP turning; that – in theory – you can even see the music cut into its surface.



Conductor Teodor Currentzis's *Le nozze di Figaro* was released on LP by Sony

Ultimately, it's that ritual of playing the music that appears to be behind vinyl's comeback. Unsheathing the record, placing the stylus, flipping to the B-side – all this requires a certain amount of devotion, representing a homage to those who created the performance, even the music itself. 'For our customers, it's about taking a record, placing it on the turntable, sitting down with a glass of

wine and enjoying the listening experience,' says Linn's Kim Campbell, and it is an argument you hear time and again. In an age of total accessibility, vinyl poses a tantalising invitation to those of us who value concentrated listening, irrespective of opinions on sound.

So what of Milner's 'crowd forced on to a reservation'? Does that crowd now have the ear of the record industry, or even the music-consuming public? 'I'm sure vinyl has a future, but I'm not so sure it's anything to bank on,' the author says. 'When I wrote the book, I thought it was amazing that you could carry thousands of songs around in your pocket. And now, with streaming, I can own something like 90 per cent of the world's music – that is, if "owning" means listening to it whenever I want. I will go to my grave thinking that vinyl sounds better. But I'm sure that for the last years of my life I will have listened to more digital music than analogue music.'

Milner is not alone. And if the BPI's research is correct, cross-media music consumption is the future. Perhaps the most encouraging signal we can take from the miniscule but growing vinyl market is that musical curiosity and a penetrative attitude to listening are qualities that are still valued, and might even be on the up. Many readers will remember the days of subscription-CD purchasing through music clubs, a model which has sprung back into life off the back of vinyl's resurgence. A new breed of vinyl 'clubs' will despatch a curated batch of art-house, limited-edition LPs to your door once a month (with a classical slant, if you so desire); members simply have to entrust their aesthetic tastes to the judgment of a stranger rather than putting their faith in ads and airplay.

But there's a string attached – and it's a digital one. Many of those records come with numerical codes that also allow you to access the music in digital form via your computer. In terms of company-customer satisfaction, it's a win-win: the label already has your money and the download mechanism costs next to nothing (Amazon got wise to the economics of this early on with its 'Auto-Rip' service) while we get to hear our music in more than one room. It has taken a music industry in dire straits to prompt this buy-your-cake-and-eat-it attitude. And on the basis of that model, why not, like the Scientologists, squirrel away permanent records rather than transient CDs – even if you prefer digital sound? 'I absolutely love vinyl,' says a glowing Barry Holden as I leave him in his office, surrounded by the decorative sleeves of his latest releases. 'There's a magical warmth to the music that comes out of a record. It's incomparable. But it's never going to work in my car.' **G**

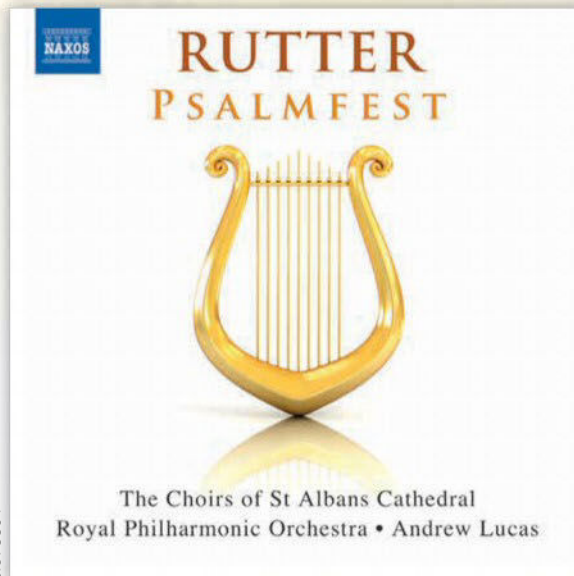


Supply and demand: in 2015, Linn shipped 70 per cent more turntables than in 2012

PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHYUKI OHBA, ANTON ZAVYALOV, LINN



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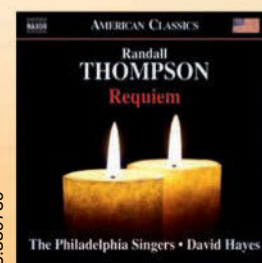
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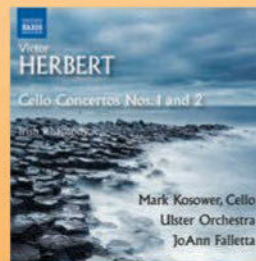
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Nikolaus Harnoncourt, 1929–2016

The conductor changed the sound of music in our time: there is no simpler way to put it. Nicholas Kenyon pays tribute

Nikolaus Harnoncourt died on March 5 at the age of 86, just three months after his retirement from concert-giving. It may be too soon to appreciate quite how radical and long-lasting has been his imprint on the musical world. He led the way; he was the pioneer. He would have been the first to object that

the achievements of his lifetime were not just his, they were those of a generation of colleagues and performers who changed the musical landscape over the last half-century; but thanks to his extraordinary body of more than 500 recordings over the most fertile period of the recording era, he made a profound impact on the taste of countless listeners, and has left a permanent legacy.

His music-making was truly radical: he might well have hated the word, but he was a real revolutionary. From an aristocratic background – he was born in Berlin on December 6, 1929, Johann Nikolaus Graf de la Fontaine und d'Harnoncourt-Unverzagt, his mother the granddaughter of a Habsburg Archduke – he trained as a cellist and viola da gamba player. He joined the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, but it was not long before he began to react violently against both the continuous tradition of a performance style which, for example, relegated Mozart to just a pleasant, smiling upbeat to more serious music, and to the top-down, autocratic style of so many conductors of the time.

Harnoncourt wanted to ask why. He wanted to explore why composers made their music sound as it did, to understand what their intentions were, to react to the instruments they used and to their sonorities, and to see how they could best be recreated anew in our time. He did not believe in 'authenticity' as such, and never used the word. Instead he questioned 'tradition as laziness' in the same way that Mahler had before him. Harnoncourt wrote in 1954: 'An interpretation must be attempted in which the whole romantic tradition of performance is ignored... Today we only want to accept the composition itself as a source, and present it as our own responsibility. The attempt must thus again be made today, with Bach's masterpieces in particular, to hear and perform them as if they had never been interpreted before, as though they had never been formed or distorted.'

That was a magisterial statement of the position that gained ever greater strength during the succeeding decades. We might now cavil at the moral judgement in the word 'distorted', and question whether a performance style could ever really be created from scratch, but Harnoncourt's mission was totally clear-sighted and single-minded.

With his wife, the violinist Alice Hoffelner, he founded *Concentus Musicus Wien* in 1953, and they studied, researched

and rehearsed for four years before giving their first public concert in 1957. They made the first of their many recordings: a precious example survives from 1954, of Bach solo cantatas for alto and the *Agnus Dei* from the B minor Mass sung by Alfred Deller, with a tiny string ensemble including Harnoncourt and his wife, and Gustav Leonhardt, and his wife Marie. (On the last of his far-too-rare appearances in London, at the Barbican in 2012, when he conducted the Royal Concertgebouw in *Missa solennis* and received the Royal Philharmonic Society's gold medal, Harnoncourt warmly recalled Deller as one of his first links with Britain.) Concentus Musicus went on to explore Purcell, Biber, Schmelzer, the music of the Mannheim Court (a lively 1963 disc with Stamitz, Richter and JC Bach stands up very well today). It was in Bach that the ensemble first gained wide attention: the *Brandenburg Concertos* with Harnoncourt playing cello, and then the *St John Passion* under Hans Gillesberger's direction. But it was Harnoncourt's direction of Bach's B minor Mass in 1968 that caused the greatest stir, with boys' voices in the choir and new approaches to phrasing, balance and articulation. 'All this music-making by the book is a bit pitiful...' huffed the eminent Paul Henry Lang in *High Fidelity*. But whatever the musicologists thought, the public loved it, and the transparency, rhythmic sharpness and instrumental and vocal freshness of Harnoncourt's approach engaged a new generation of listeners.

As result of those successes, Harnoncourt became a regular recording artist for Telefunken, and a dazzling succession of newly imagined interpretations emerged. I can recall the impact of an early single disc of three Bach cantatas from 1969 (*Gott ist unsre Zuversicht*, No 197, is utterly uplifting); Harnoncourt was then asked with Leonhardt to undertake a complete Bach cantata cycle for Telefunken from 1971, and, for its devotees, this became one of the most exciting recording projects of the decade. The LP boxes with their full scores included were eagerly awaited, and if Harnoncourt's contributions tended to be more hit-and-miss than those of the sober Leonhardt, they were never less than vivid explorations of marvellous music: for a random example, try *Jesu der du meine Seele*, No 78, with its peerlessly dramatic opening chorus and racy duet. This complete church cantata cycle remains one of the most influential products of the recording era, and a defining project of the period-instrument movement.

Then it was back to Monteverdi and forward to Mozart. Harnoncourt had first entered the opera house with Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, and he staged the Monteverdi trilogy with Jean-Pierre Ponnelle in Zurich – it came to the Edinburgh Festival in 1978. He had played in *Orfeo* under Paul Hindemith back in 1954, but his lavish musical realisations of *Ulisse* and *Poppea* went, for the purists, beyond the bounds of historical justification. In Mozart, the defining moment was his recording of *Idomeneo* in 1980 with the Zurich Opera forces (a brilliant extract from the climax of the ballet music introduces Harnoncourt's informative website at harnoncourt.info). This had vital rhythmic punch and forceful accents, and conductors began to absorb this newly pungent contemporary style (Bernard Haitink recommended it to the young Simon Rattle!). Versions of all the later Mozart operas were stimulating but more variable, perhaps because Harnoncourt was too often trying to make points in music that needs to sound completely natural. For me, the neglected


triumph among these Mozart opera recordings was his 1990 *Lucio Silla*, with the unbeatable soprano trio of Cecilia Bartoli (whom he later introduced to the Proms in 1997), the great Edita Gruberová and the young Dawn Upshaw.

As the succession of highly praised recordings continued, Harnoncourt quickly began to be invited by those orchestras which felt they had much to learn from the innovations of period-instrument performance. The later Mozart symphonies with the Concertgebouw were a triumph (I can still hear the end of the *Jupiter*, as trumpets and drums advance from afar to quash the fugal counterpoint). It was, however, the interaction with the flexible, willing modern instruments of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe that produced the most exciting results, in the complete Beethoven symphonies cycle of 1992: this caught the spirit of the moment, sold astoundingly well, and converted even some of the most diehard traditionalists to the virtues of Harnoncourt's approach. On his retirement last year he had just embarked on a new Beethoven cycle with his own Concentus Musicus Wien, but only a searing coupling of Symphonies Nos 4 and 5 appeared.

Though he lived so near to Salzburg (in an unpretentious farmhouse, large enough to house all his instruments) and taught there for many years, Harnoncourt was famously kept out of the Salzburg Festival during the Karajan epoch. After

Karajan he was cautiously welcomed in, conducting Mozart opera there, and then came to the heart of the European establishment with two appearances in 2001 and

2003 at the New Year's Day concert in Vienna. Even the Vienna Philharmonic eventually saw the point, and they had a late, close and warm relationship. Brahms with the Berlin Philharmonic, Schubert with the Concertgebouw, Schumann, Bruckner (with great attention to wind sonorities), Dvořák, Verdi (less successful), Bizet's *Carmen*, Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* (because of a family connection with the score), but never quite Berg's *Wozzeck* or any complete Wagner opera – the range of his repertoire became remarkable. Harnoncourt could certainly be eccentric in his musical choices, and no one would say he was always right. (A very distinguished performer from the Viennese tradition once said to me in an aside: 'I really admire him, but I hate everything he does.') Even if his ideas seemed misguided, like his recent conclusion that Mozart's three last symphonies were all part of one 'instrumental oratorio', they were always challenging and thought-provoking.

His approach as a conductor was fundamentally gestural, sweeping the music along with his hands (he never used a baton) and never minding some rough edges and astringent textures along the way. This was just one of the elements that made his recordings so gripping: the music leapt out towards you with an urgent communicativeness that was impossible to avoid, and about which it was difficult to remain neutral. Personally, he was always engaged with his players and their ideas, always ready for a debate, always attentive – with Alice at his side caring for every practical detail – to the next musical challenge. For Harnoncourt it was the substance of the music that came first; as he once memorably put it, 'Töne sind höhere Worte': 'Notes are a higher form of words'. 

Nicholas Kenyon is Managing Director of the Barbican Centre and a former Editor of *Early Music*. He edited *Authenticity and Early Music* (OUP, 1988)



Ruby Hughes and Joseph Middleton recording
in 'The Music Room' at Champs Hill

One hundred recordings and counting...The art of music-making at Champs Hill

The 'retirement project' that started out as a concert hall and picture gallery has blossomed into an independent record label, now celebrating its 100th release, writes Harriet Smith

The instructions 'turn left at the rockery and head towards the bungalow' hardly gave due warning of what was in store when I reached Champs Hill, deep in the West Sussex countryside, on a dank January morning. Not only did the 'rockery' turn out to be part of a spectacular 27-acre garden overlooking the South Downs, but this bungalow had a concert hall beside it.

While there may be no shortage of music lovers in the world, few have given back so generously as Mary and David Bowerman in what is effectively their retirement project. Having farmed for 40 years, they know all about hard work, which is just as well. When we meet, David is about to celebrate his 80th birthday (with a concert of course, featuring the swing quintet Man Overboard), yet their commitment to Champs Hill and the record company remains undimmed.

The impetus for building the hall was the great storm of 1987, which laid bare a whole swathe of woodland. As Mary says with typical understatement: 'We had a mad moment when we thought – we must have our own concert hall.' And rather than call in professional acousticians, they used a local architect and a local builder, with David trusting his own ear when it came to the acoustic itself. His other passion in life is art, so this was to be a gallery as well as a concert hall. When I visited, I was greeted by a beautifully curated collection of oils by Augustus John, Kyffin Williams, Fred Yates and Lucien Pissarro (eldest son of Camille), which conversed effortlessly with bronzes by Jacob Epstein and Renoir. It was, David admitted, the tip of the iceberg, as he has been collecting all his life.

Everything has the personal touch. The piano, for instance. 'I kept going to Steinway's once a week,' says David, 'and trying out all their concert grands, and there was one I kept coming back to'. He chose well (even Graham Johnson was impressed) and, true to form, it's a highly nurtured instrument, thoroughly overhauled once a year.

'Not only does the hall look beautiful but it resonates wonderfully and isn't plagued with passing traffic' – Dame Felicity Lott

Felicity Lott – who christened the hall in 1999 with a recital with Johnson – summed up the allure of the place: 'One of the great things about it is that it represents one person's choice of music and artists and has integrity. Not only does the hall look beautiful but it resonates wonderfully and isn't plagued with passing traffic. It also has the inestimable benefit of the presence of David and Mary. They are the most generous, warm people and are brilliant at getting things done. Once David gets an idea in his head he doesn't let it go. This concert hall is an extraordinary venue.'

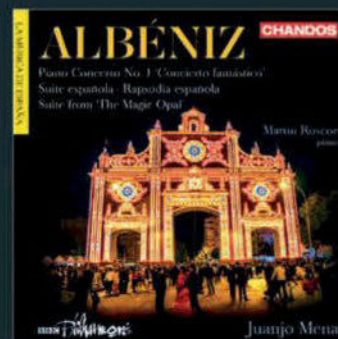
Even before the storm, the notion of a hall grew from the fact that David was already sponsoring a lot of young musicians, so a venue seemed a natural progression. There's no sense of self-indulgence here, but rather a heartfelt desire to give talented musicians the best possible start in their professional life. They still sponsor artists through music college. 'They become like family. The viola player Krzysztof Chorzelski [of the Belcea Quartet] was still in his first year at the Royal College of Music when we began helping him. And Laura Samuel, too. We're so proud of what she has achieved both in the Belcea and now as Leader of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.' David maintains tight control, though: 'I approve who's coming to give concerts, and also the repertoire, because if you don't get that right you're nowhere. But we've also had a lot of fun doing things which are a bit more unexpected, such as new music from Cheryl Frances-Hoad, who really produced a rabbit out of a hat!' Cheryl fondly recalls the experience of making her first CD on Champs Hill Records as 'uplifting and reaffirming artistically. Having good performances of your work is essential and I've been able to publicise my music a great deal more as a result of my two CDs with the label.'

The record label was founded in 2010. After several years of offering young musicians the opportunity to make demos in the hall, as well as using it as a venue for other recording outfits, Champs Hill Records was born. Seven years on, it now celebrates its 100th disc, with an album of Britten's Purcell Realizations.

The producer and engineer Alexander Van Ingen has been a key player in the label's activities. 'Its primary aim is helping

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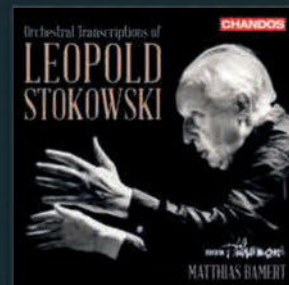


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young artists, so they will perhaps do a couple of discs and then that might lead them on to recording for a label that's run on more commercial lines, as well as helping artists get agents and concerts.' He cites the accordion player Ksenija Sidorova, whom David had spotted while an undergraduate at the Royal Academy of Music. 'Her demo disc was always destined to be a commercial success – it was brilliant. That was followed by a concerto recording with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales; now she's on Decca. And there's the pianist Alexandra Dariescu, who will follow her CDs of preludes for Champs Hill with Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto with the RPO for Signum later this year.' One could add to that pianist Ivana Gavrić, whose most recent recording for the label, of music by Grieg, was a *Gramophone* Editor's Choice in March 2014.

He adds: 'One of the best things about it for me is the atmosphere – without that, you can have the best set-up in the world but you're not going to get a great recording out of it. With Champs Hill you sense that they want you to succeed and to create music in the best way.'

Though it's a label predominantly focused on supporting up-and-coming artists, it says much for David and Mary's ability to talent-spot (helped by a considerable network of musicians) that this is no mere starter label. As Mary explains, 'We pay for everything – the recordings don't make us any money – but we need to produce something that people will want to listen to.'

They now enjoy associations with the Leeds International Piano Competition and the Windsor String Competition, YCAT and the BBC's New Generation Artists scheme – not a bad line-up! As David says: 'We don't pay artists to come and record here, so if they want to, they're serious. But when they do, they're looked after royally by Mary for four days.'

Time and again, artists reminisce not only about the hall itself but the hospitality – and Mary's legendary catering. It's also bolstered by the presence of figures such as Felicity Lott, Graham Johnson, the Allegri Quartet and the Gould Trio. And the repertoire tends to be away from the mainstream: Röntgen String Trios, anyone? Or Thuille songs and chamber works, not to mention contemporary repertoire by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Sally Beamish, Sir James MacMillan and – in the pipeline – Jonathan Dove's complete songs for mezzo with Kitty Whately.



Mary and David Bowerman run all aspects of the business and hospitality at Champs Hill

'With Champs Hill you sense that they want you to succeed and to create music in the best way' – Alexander Van Ingen, producer

Joseph Middleton is another artist who has become a familiar presence on Champs Hill Records, admired as much for his imaginative programming – 'it's my inner geek' – as for his pianism. He first got involved when he made a demo disc with Sophie Bevan. 'And then I was absolutely amazed to get an email about a month later asking if I could record some Elgar songs with Felicity Lott! And it has just carried on from there, which has been hugely beneficial.'

It is he who put together the Britten Purcell Realizations project. 'What I really like about these works is that you have two giants of British music reaching out to each other over the centuries.' His decision to use quite contrasting voice-types, from the 'early music' purity of Robin Blaze and Ruby Hughes to the more fulsome timbre of Anna Grevelius, is striking. 'I knew that the voices would blend, and they're similar types of artists in that they all like chamber-music repertoire. Someone like Matthew

Rose – who had just played Bottom in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Glyndebourne – comes to the songs very much from a theatrical point of view, which is helpful because what connects Purcell and Britten so brilliantly is that they both understood theatre, which is something these songs really exploit. And that's not to say that Ruby and Robin don't sing dramatically, because they do, but Ruby approached them having sung Purcell's songs, which was also fascinating.' Rose concurs, adding, 'What Purcell created originally was so modern and his word-painting is just exquisite. To have that Britten touch on top of the genius that is Purcell creates some of the most exciting and beautiful songs in the whole repertoire.'

Middleton has also worked with Hughes on another new disc, 'Nocturnal Variations', which is the singer's first solo song disc. 'That was a combined effort – Ruby planned a lot of it and we then played through tons of songs and came up with that particular programme. She's a very interesting artist – with strong views of what she wants to do, which is really good.'

As I prepare to leave, a new sculpture for the garden is being gently unloaded. The collecting, like the music, never stops. **G**

► To read our review of Benjamin Appl's recording on Champs Hill, turn to page 80; the Britten Purcell Realizations disc is reviewed next issue



Entering the world of the **SUN KING**

Sébastien Daucé continues his exploration of Louis XIV's court with a disc of Chapelle Royale composer Du Mont, writes Martin Cullingford

A visit to Versailles in the 21st century is an awe-inspiring experience. Imagine, then, what the 17th-century courtier (or, for that matter, commoner) would have felt. That, of course, was exactly the point. The sheer opulence and grandeur was meant to leave the visitor in no doubt of the monarch's might. If any building were to send you falling to your knees in homage – or set them trembling

and Étienne Moulinié, both of whose music he has recorded – who were all, he believes, 'very great composers; but the 19th century didn't know them so we don't know them now. But they were the great composers of their time and the music is still very interesting, even if it's bizarre.

'I think Boësset and all these composers were known only by specialists, so we have a lot of scientific articles about them in

in fear if you had cause to – then it's Versailles.

Louis XIV, the self-styled Sun King, saw art and architecture as the projection of power, and power emanating specifically from him rather than from foreign or rival forces. This vision was to prove transformative in many fields, not least music. It's this world – and 'world' is not such an inappropriate term, for Louis XIV was very much trying to create a political culture that orbited around him – that conductor Sébastien Daucé and his Ensemble Correspondances are devoted to exploring.

The group grew out of alumni of the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Lyon who shared a fascination with 17th-century sacred music. As Daucé recalls: 'Six years ago we had 12 musicians, and they are all still here today. I'm very interested in always having the same musicians, to keep the same base of sound.' Their home may be in Lyon, but their heart is in Versailles, and so it's appropriate that this is where I meet with Daucé, prior to a performance by the musicians in the palace's beautifully restored Opéra Royal.

I ask what he feels defines his ensemble. 'Maybe the first thing is the repertoire. We want to work on the 17th-century French repertoire, with the idea that people know just a little bit of this music. We know Lully, Charpentier – and then after that we have some names, but they are not very well known.' The 19th century, he says, is when our understanding of who was who in French music history was formed. He lists a series of composers – including Antoine Boësset

the 19th century, but their music wasn't played. The experiments were with Lully and Rameau. We know that at the beginning of the 20th century Rameau was played in Dijon, just once, as if it were an exotic thing. But Boësset was more than exotic – to plays his music was just unthinkable.'

It was also, he says, in the 19th century that our understanding of what Baroque music sounded like, and how it was played, was formed – though with the better-known music of the 18th century in mind. 'But the world was so different at this time. Between the 17th and 18th century there is a gap, and the way of thinking about the world changes totally. So when you have studied Couperin and we ask you to play Moulinié – it's Chinese music! The problem is, if you don't know the language, it's nothing, but when you know it – wow! This music is just incredible.'

Tonight's programme is of Ensemble Correspondances' project based around the *Ballet Royal de la Nuit*, a major piece of entertainment staged by the 15-year-old Louis XIV in 1653. (Released as 'Le Concert Royal de la Nuit', the disc earned an Editor's Choice in November last year). Daucé's reconstruction aims to bring to life this night-long spectacular (which resembles something closer to a court masque than the classical-dance theatre form we now associate with the term 'ballet'). It was designed to extol the King's virtues, both physical and spiritual; the teenage Louis XIV's hold on power was, at this stage, not yet grounded in the unassailable foundations he was to build over his long reign. An evening of music, mingled with speech, theatre and other performance elements, was a way to establish his prestige. That many courtiers, too, were expected to take part was an expression of their status within the hierarchy. Both disc and concert are a compelling evocation of the sound and significance of music in the Sun King's court.

The group's new recording, however – due out at the end of April on Harmonia Mundi – is a smaller scale though no less interesting project. For two decades, from 1663 to 1683, Henry Du Mont was strongly associated with the music of Louis XIV's Chapelle Royale. 'I think he is just as important to sacred music as Lully is to opera,' says Daucé. His great achievement was to create a musical form: the grand motet. Du Mont, who spent his formative years in Liège, arrived in Paris in the 1640s, already versed in Italian, German and French music. By 1643 he was a respected organist; by the early 1650s he was working for the court as harpsichordist to the King's brother; and in 1660 he was appointed organist to Louis XIV's young bride, Queen Marie-Thérèse. Three years later he was elevated to *sous-maître* of the Chapelle Royale. Initially he shared this post with three other composers, and by 1668 with just one other, Pierre Robert. He was then appointed the Chapelle Royale's *compositeur de musique* and finally *maître de la musique de la reine* in 1673. Over this period he composed nearly 70 grand motets, which used both a small and large chorus as well as instrumentalists, to be performed during the celebration of Mass.

It was a time when Louis XIV was looking for something new – for, as Daucé puts it, 'a special national art'. It was also, however, a time before the court became settled at Versailles and so it was 'always moving, with regular musicians but always in different places and with different instruments. So Du Mont has to invent something that can adapt to these different places.' Until recently, what's generally been known of Du Mont owes much to editions of his music completed shortly after his death, which reflected the then current style of performance rather than the composer's actual intentions. 'Just horrible, many faults, many bizarre things,' is Daucé's blunt view of these editions. Strip the music back to the original, he says, and 'everything is more transparent. We can hear very clearly the



Passion: Daucé is determined to bring us closer to the music of 17th-century France

'Later in Louis XIV's reign, there was this sort of "fat" music – impressive but not as brilliant as Du Mont's' – Sébastien Daucé

polyphony, we can have a better balance between musicians and singers, and you don't hear the music in the same way.' As is so often the case, in-depth research, musical instinct, experimentation and guesswork (not least about the exact nature of one of the instruments referred to in sources as a *grosse basse*) have all played their part in bringing us closer to Du Mont's original, pioneering vision.

Du Mont's music had been central to the Sun King's early, peripatetic court, and an order by the King for it to be printed – an unusual honour for the time – proves the respect he had for the composer. But by the time Louis XIV settled permanently in the newly glorified Versailles in 1682 he was looking for something new – and Du Mont was not, it seems, the man to offer it. Both he and Robert retired. 'The general aesthetic of Louis XIV's reign is that it starts with music that is smaller-scale but very brilliant, and ends with this sort of "fat" music,' says Daucé. 'The music after Du Mont was probably very impressive, but not the brilliant thing that we had at the beginning of the reign.' And it's that earlier music, composed by Du Mont, that he and his ensemble celebrate on the new disc.

From Du Mont, Daucé next hopes to return to Charpentier. But not without harbouring a further intriguing ambition inspired not by the great palace just up the road from where we meet, but by an entirely different venue over in London.

'I went a few days ago to see a show at the Globe,' says Daucé, referring to the reconstruction of Shakespeare's theatre. 'It's incredible. If I can dream to play somewhere it's there – not the Paris Opera. You are so close to the audience, it's just a perfect place.' What he'd particularly like to stage are the spectacular masques created for the restored Stuarts by the likes of Matthew Locke – composers who were influenced by French music and by the ballets of the type explored in 'Le Concert Royal de la Nuit'. 'I think the first masque we have of Locke could fit perfectly in this place,' he says.

If a channel separates England and France, a massive gulf separates the grandeur of the Versailles Opéra Royal from the recreated rough-and-ready timber and thatch of Shakespeare's Globe. What they both share, however, is a compelling sense of the distant past feeling vividly close at hand. And that's not a bad way to describe the driving vision of Sebastian Daucé and his enterprising ensemble. 6

The Du Mont disc is released on April 29; see next issue for our review

GRAMOPHONE

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Edward Seckerson welcomes a luminous new recording of
Elgar's First Symphony from Daniel Barenboim in Berlin



Elgar

Symphony No 1, Op 55

Staatskapelle Berlin /

Daniel Barenboim

Decca © 478 9353DH (51 • DDD)

Barenboim's long association with, and love for, Elgar has effectively made it part of his musical DNA. He understands its particulars and, to put it simply, he knows how it goes. And because he is a master he has somehow communicated all of that, both in practical and spiritual terms, to an orchestra for whom it is relatively unfamiliar. That is the really startling achievement here and it manifests itself in playing that is as exciting as it is nuanced and which can turn on a sixpence because Barenboim and his players 'read' each other so well. That which might sound mannered in other hands (though it must be said that Barenboim has matured and refined his 'expressivity') is here so naturally achieved.

He has mastered the long and difficult first movement chronicling the turbulence of an era – indeed of life in general – in which tiny oases of peace and tranquillity open up as if recalling happier times.

The scoring is so fragrant and beautiful in these Elysian departures and the subtle balancing of leading and accompanying voices makes for some unique Elgarian colours. Indeed, the recording balance generally (producer Andrew Keener) is exemplary, the ear constantly arrested by telling details so often absorbed into the overall richness of Elgar's soundscape.

But to return again to the structure of this first movement, it is Barenboim's command of transition, of ebb and flow, storm and stress, that carries all before it. Those fleeting reveries are soon buffeted by the prevailing



The English accent is very much written into this music but the Staatskapelle Berlin seem to feel it intuitively, not least with regard to its deep and abiding sense of consolation

winds of change and Barenboim does not spare the rhetoric in conveying the anguish of what that means in the context of the symphony as a whole. The returning

motto theme – one of Elgar's noblest processional – is heavily indecisive in the closing minutes of the movement. Doubt and a sense of unfinished business prevail.

In Barenboim's fiercely dynamic approach to the scherzo – full of martial gung-ho – we know why. It is as if the music is scenting impending strife (premonitions of the Great War) and there is no small irony here in its Teutonic brashness. Again, the trio feels like a conscious distraction from the fearful and the gradual winding-down into the great slow movement is marvellously achieved.

If the symphony, as Elgar himself suggested, is essentially a formal expression of human experience with all its trials and tribulations but ultimately a need to 'come home' with hope, then the First Symphony's slow movement is where everything is put into perspective and all of life's disappointments and regrets are tempered with a deeper sense of resignation. Complex character that Elgar was, that found its way into the writing and Barenboim's generously sounded account of this wonderful movement makes such capital of the depth achieved in the subdivisions of

the string-writing. I know that the peculiarly English accent is very much written into this music but his Staatskapelle Berlin seem to feel it intuitively, not least with regard to its deep and abiding sense of consolation. That is universal, of course, and reminds me of a very well-known conductor who observed that if Elgar had been born in Austria he'd have been called Mahler.

The quiet hush of resignation at the close of the movement (achieved at a price, we are made to believe) is breathtaking without feeling affected – as in super-hushed for theatrical effect – still retaining its full tone, and the pale, wistful





Nobilmente: Daniel Barenboim and the Staatskapelle Berlin performing Elgar's First Symphony

clarinet peeping through in the final bar again reminds us how subtle Elgar's colorations are.

And so the finale is upon us, with the motto theme darkly disguised. Barenboim's drive through the movement's development feels like a kind of celebration of what the symphonic *allegro* can generate in terms of energy, and it is only when it finally does abate into a kind of repose that you instinctively know that something wondrous this way comes. The transformation of that darkly ominous march into something radiant and transcendental is quite simply one of the great moments in English (or any) music, and Barenboim and his orchestra ease us so gently into this revelation that the climax when it comes sings all the more gloriously.

The 'triumphant' return of the motto is quite thrilling and again quite unlike anything else in Elgar: those euphoric *sforzandos* really make the heart leap in what has to be one of the most original depictions of hard-won jubilation in music. The dense swelling of the orchestration in these pages sounds marvellous here with again exemplary balances.

So there isn't a tempo, a turn of phrase or a rubato anywhere that I would take issue with. More importantly, the whole feels thoroughly integrated and gloriously spontaneous. This is up there, you'll have gathered, with the very finest that the gramophone has yet given us of this great – and finally, I hope, universally celebrated – symphony. **G**

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Orchestral



Christian Hoskins on Yannick Nezet-Séguin's new Mahler 1:

'The Bavarians, with their long experience of performing Mahler, deliver superbly precise and detailed playing' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 39**



Harriet Smith on Mendelssohn and Schuman from Ingrid Fliter:

'Fliter's alive to the impetuosity of the outer movements, as well as to the work's more poetic elements.' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 40**

Armstrong Gibbs

Crossings, Op 20. The Enchanted Wood, Op 25^a. A Vision of Night, Op 38. Dusk, Op 82 No 3. Suite, Op 101^b. The Cat and the Wedding Cake

ab^c Charles Mutter vn^a Ben Dawson pf

BBC Concert Orchestra / Ronald Corp

Dutton Epoch ④ CDLX7324 (77' • DDD/DSD)



Cecil Armstrong Gibbs is one of those names you used to come across in piano

stools: a very English *petit-maître* remembered today, if at all, for his endearing settings of Walter de la Mare. On the strength of this well-filled disc of premiere recordings, his light orchestral music belongs to the same imaginative world. Slight, sentimental and a little faded, if you wanted to be unkind. Charming, well crafted and warmly melodious, if you're more generously inclined.

Decide for yourself, because it's hard to imagine anyone making a more handsome case than Ronald Corp and the BBC Concert Orchestra do here. The works included span Armstrong Gibbs's entire career. If his early incidental music to de la Mare's children's play *Crossings* and his 'dance phantasy' *The Enchanted Wood* evoke the same post-Edwardian fairyland as Elgar's *The Starlight Express* or Quilter's *Where the Rainbow Ends*, the chromatic half-lights of his once-popular concert waltz *Dusk* suggest a musical imagination no longer quite at ease with the world around it – and there's more than a hint of melancholy about the late *Four Orchestral Dances* of 1959. The work that springs out most vividly is the spirited, mock-Baroque Suite in A for violin and orchestra, delivered here with considerable gusto by the BBC CO's current acting leader Charles Mutter.

My only reservation about these smiling performances concerns Corp's tendency to relaxation: to let this music merely glow where it might have sparkled. And that Lewis Foreman's excellent booklet-notes leave us relatively in the dark about the

intriguingly titled *The Cat and the Wedding Cake* – and its source, the unproduced 'television operetta' *Mr Cornelius*. Scope for a follow-up disc there, perhaps?

Richard Bratby

JS Bach

Six Brandenburg Concertos, BWV1046-1051

Neumeyer Consort / Felix Koch

Christophorus ④ CHR77400 (92' • DDD)

JS Bach

Six Brandenburg Concertos, BWV1046-1051.

Jesu, joy of man's desiring (arr Reyne)

La *Symphonie du Marais* / Hugo Reyne //

Musiques à la Chabotterie ④ ② 605014 (101' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Théâtre da Thalie, Montaigne

(Vendée), July 18 & 19, 2012



Neither of the ensembles on these two new *Brandenburg* sets is among the star names in the field, but the catalogue they enter is hardly an uncrowded one, which means we can afford to be picky with them. Can they bring us something new or simply something outstandingly good?

The Neumeyer Consort have made only a handful of recordings, and this must count as their strongest statement of intent so far. They do a job decent enough for anyone coming new to these concertos to recognise them for the miracles they are, but do not really offer enough to compete with (to mention just some of the fine recordings of recent years) the English Baroque Soloists, the Dunedin Consort or Florilegium. Non-playing conductor Felix Koch clearly has a sense for stylish gestural articulation but seems unable to use it to inspire his performers as one might wish. The heavy leans on to the second note of the long-short-short oboe figures in the second movement of Concerto No 1 surely have the right idea but actually come across as laboured, and too often elsewhere there

is an unsettling feeling of sluggishness – in the third movement of No 1, for instance, or the first movement of No 4. Strangely, it is not that any of the speeds seems slow in itself (indeed, the first movement of No 6 is unpleasantly fast); rather it feels as if the orchestra is not quite up with the game, not acting as a galvanised unit. Neither are they helped by a recording that lacks both depth and definition, leaving the horns too muffled in No 1, the recorders too prominent in No 4.

Hugo Reyne's *La Symphonie du Marais* have been around longer but are associated more with French music than with Bach.

Their new recording comes live from concerts in the Théâtre de Thalie in Montaigne, and therein lies its biggest problem: the sound is disturbingly boxy and dry. This is fine if you want to hear every contrapuntal strand (and, let's face it, there is much to be said for that), but in many other ways it is an uncomfortable experience. This is a pity, because Reyne – who plays the recorder solos, as well as the flute part of No 5 on a D recorder (or voice flute) – is a thoughtful and sensitive musician well worth listening to. His ideas include recorders in strongly contrasted echo in the slow movement of No 4, a fast Minuet in No 1 and a first movement of No 6 that acquires aristocratic poise from what these days is a moderate tempo. Above all he creates what Neumeyer fails to – performances of communicated fellowship and joy, their magical influence revealed by the way the audience spontaneously join in the encore, Reyne's own rather rustic arrangement of *Jesu, joy of man's desiring*. **Lindsay Kemp**

JS Bach

'Harpichord Concertos, Vol 3'

Double Concertos^a - BWV1060; BWV1061;

BWV1062. Triple Concertos - BWV1044^b;

BWV1063^c; BWV1064^c. Concerto for Four

harpichords, BWV1065^d

^bKaty Bircher // ^bManfredo Kraemer vn^dMarcus

Mohlin, ^{acd}Trevor Pinnoch, ^{cd}Marieke Spaans *hpds*

Concerto Copenhagen / Lars Ulrik Mortensen *hpd*

CPO ④ ② CPO777 681-2 (106' • DDD)



The Neumeyer Consort and Felix Koch set out a strong statement of intent in Bach's Brandenburg Concertos



The concertos for multiple harpsichords from the 1730s are, for the most part,

transcriptions from lost earlier (or near-contemporaneous) sources for other instruments – mostly violins, one suspects – but beautifully recrafted by Bach for his Collegium Musicum concert series in Leipzig. Indeed, the vision of father, sons and pupils performing these works in Zimmermann's coffee shop has tended to deflect snobbery that these versions are somehow 'second class'; in any case, most of these works only exist for 'claviers', so the issue is decidedly moot.

There's nothing moot about these strong and satisfyingly direct readings. While nominally helmed by Lars Ulrik Mortensen, his partner in crime is the indefatigable Trevor Pinnock (whose own performances for Archiv in 1980 remain a durable collection for any library) and from the outset the music-making seems to be predicated on gracious partnership and delight in exchange.

Of the three double concertos, BWV1060–62, the famous 'violin double' always presents the greatest challenge, mainly because the 'holy grail' *Adagio* has none of the visceral qualities of solo strings dovetailing, yearning and yielding with their varying timbres and sustained vocalising. The answer on the harpsichord resides in this touchingly articulated, delicately unfolding essay of exquisite intimacy. The wonder of this creation is lessened not a jot in its new clothes. Much of the success of these slow movements is the quiet nobility of the embellishment, spontaneous, unselfserving and experienced.

The recreational spirit which must have characterised the Collegium Musicum concerts perhaps encourages one to excuse the slightly rough-and-ready string-playing of Concerto Copenhagen: incongruous blend and unsteady rhythm, especially in the outer movements, rears its head intermittently. Yet there is always something to be said for an approach that allows room for discovery at the point of execution.

Certainly, compared to the meticulously regulated performances of Andreas Staier

and the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra in their recent solo concerto recordings (Harmonia Mundi, 9/15), these readings are considerably less highly wrought. A refreshing lack of artfulness here, confirmed by each of the triple concertos delivering unaffected and energised performances, more than makes up for it. While stylistically poles apart, they convey the same joyful, uninhibited spirit as the Württemberg Chamber Orchestra and Jörg Faerber from the late 1970s. **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**

Bax · Butterworth · Scott

Bax Variations for Orchestra (Improvisations)

Butterworth Fantasia for Orchestra **Scott** Poem, 'The Melodist and the Nightingales'^a

^a**Aleksei Kiseliov** VC

Royal Scottish National Orchestra / **Martin Yates**
Dutton Epoch (P) CDLX7326 (62) • DDD/DSD



'Eccentric very!' commented Edward German upon reading the manuscript score of Arnold Bax's Variations for orchestra. Completed in June 1904 when Bax was still

a student at the RAM, it was submitted by his teacher Frederick Corder for the RCM's Patron Fund rehearsal in May 1905. Lewis Foreman's booklet-note quotes Bax's hilarious description of this event (taken from his autobiography, *Farewell, My Youth*), to which he turned up in the nick of time, only to discover – to his utter dread – that he was expected to conduct the piece himself! 'Ye look warm, young man,' observed Stanford at the end of some '45 minutes of mental and physical misery', after which the 20-year-old vowed never to pick up a baton again. It's an engaging offering, full of youthful confidence and displaying no little inventive flair, culminating in an extended finale which incorporates a stirring melody with a subtly Irish flavour.

Among the papers left by George Butterworth was a manuscript containing 93 fully scored bars of an unnamed orchestral work. We can now experience that material for ourselves thanks to the efforts of conductor Martin Yates, who has fashioned a highly effective 16-minute Fantasia for orchestra that attempts to place Butterworth's final thoughts in a meaningful context. The very end, in which two trumpets play the last notes that appear in the composer's hand before fading to nothing, is a particularly touching inspiration.

There's also plenty to warm the cockles in Cyril Scott's Poem for cello and orchestra *The Melodist and the Nightingales*. Dedicated to Beatrice Harrison (who gave the June 1929 premiere at London's Queen's Hall with Beecham conducting), it's a gorgeously sultry, delectably fragrant evocation. Suffice to say, RSNO principal cellist Aleksei Kiseliyov makes a lovely job of the solo part, and here as elsewhere Yates secures impressively secure results, all captured with conspicuous realism by the Dutton microphones. **Andrew Achenbach**

Beethoven

Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 19; No 2, Op 15
Hannes Minnaar *pf* **Netherlands Symphony Orchestra / Jan Willem de Vriend**
 Challenge Classics (F)  CC72712 (65' • DDD/DSD)



I much enjoyed the first instalment of Beethoven's piano concertos with this all-Dutch line-up, which boldly began with the Fourth and Fifth (8/15). And there's no slackening-off of quality in this second volume. The B flat (No 2) can seem in some cycles a bit of a poor relation, but not

here: the long opening *tutti* of the first movement is, in Jan Willem de Vriend's hands, by turns yearning and punchily energetic, with vibrato used sparingly in the strings. Hannes Minnaar doesn't by any means underplay the movement's Mozartian qualities but he also relishes its thoroughly Beethovenian figuration and drive. The slow movement doesn't hang about, and Minnaar's range of articulation is engaging; if the lower strings are less characterful than those of the Mahler CO in their upward scales (2'26" of tr 2), that's a minor detail. They give a quietly ebullient reading of the finale, perhaps too understated for some – but one full of colour and a subtle appreciation of Beethoven's harmonic swerves.


The very different sound world of the C major Concerto (No 1), with its addition of clarinets, trumpets and timpani, is here emphasised by the orchestra's use of old brass instruments and a timpanist who, as in the first volume, is clearly enjoying himself. The slow movement is a particular highlight, Minnaar again shading the music with great subtlety, even if the piano's triplet passage (tr 5, 5'44"), with soloist set against pizzicato strings, is better balanced in Andsnes's reading with the Mahler CO; and in the section that follows, the Mahler CO's first clarinet is more impassioned (and more audible over the piano's trills) than in the new version. The interplay between soloist and orchestra in the closing moments is very sensitively wrought, though. In the finale, Andsnes is a touch more extrovert, more Beethovenian. Minnaar, on the other hand, never loses sight of the music's Mozartian filigree, and his dialogue with the orchestra is unfailingly alert and lively. Again, his range of touch is highly effective, and there is a pleasing mix of finesse and drive in the concerto's closing moments. **Harriet Smith**

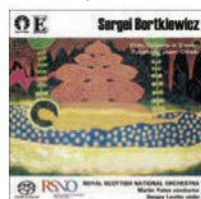
Piano Concertos – selected comparison:

Andsnes, Mahler CO

(11/12^R, 6/14^R) (SONY) 88843 05887-2

Bortkiewicz

Violin Concerto, Op 22^a. Symphonic Poem after Shakespeare's Othello, Op 19
^a**Sergei Levitin** *vn*
Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Martin Yates
 Dutton Epoch (F)  CDLX7323 (81' • DDD/DSD)




Dutton's disc (with its two premiere recordings) is already the second recording released this year devoted entirely to the music of Sergei Bortkiewicz (1877–1952). It

makes one wonder anew what would have happened if the composer had escaped the penurious life he suffered, shuffling from one European country to the next, and made for Hollywood, where his talents as a tunesmith and orchestral craftsman would surely have borne fruit and brought him the recognition he deserved.

One could hardly describe his Violin Concerto of 1922 as an adventurous, innovative masterpiece of breathtaking originality. It uses the musical language of half a century earlier and relies on techniques familiar from the concertos of Tchaikovsky, Glazunov, Arensky and others for its lifeblood (though I wonder, listening to the last movement, if Bortkiewicz had not heard Korngold's incidental music for *Much Ado About Nothing*, premiered in Vienna in 1920). Get past that hurdle, however, and you have a substantial three-movement work lasting 50 minutes of instant appeal and immense charm. Could I have wished for a heavier tone more forwardly projected from Sergey Levitin in the two outer movements? Yes. But how beautifully he shapes and sings the lovely second movement, entitled 'Poème'.

A symphonic poem follows. Bortkiewicz's Op 19, composed in 1914, follows the trajectory of Shakespeare's *Othello* and the model of one of Tchaikovsky's symphonic poems (*Romeo and Juliet* perhaps): virile, martial motifs for Othello, an insidious theme for Iago (a distant relative of Strauss's Till Eulenspiegel) and a lusciously romantic one for Desdemona. It's a highly effective concert piece, much more so than Dvořák's limp essay on the same subject. The Scottish players under the indefatigable Martin Yates play as if the music has been in their repertoire for years. The disc lasts a generous 80'46" and comes with an excellent booklet-note by Guy Rickards. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Brahms

Piano Concerto No 1, Op 15^a.
 Four Ballades, Op 10
Paul Lewis *pf* ^a**Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Daniel Harding**
 Harmonia Mundi (F)  HMC90 2191 (72' • DDD)



In a concerto that gives a fair share of the heavy lifting to the orchestra, the Swedish Radio Symphony, under Daniel Harding's expert baton, distinguish themselves. The wind band, plangent and exquisitely blended, floats effortlessly above a string choir of almost embarrassing luxuriousness.



Martin Yates and the RSNO explore eccentric Bax, unfinished Butterworth and poetic Scott

This is an ensemble that can speak audibly in the merest whisper. They are ever sensitive to their soloist, Paul Lewis, heard here in his first recording of Brahms.

Perhaps not surprisingly for a pianist who has laboured so fruitfully in Schubert's field, Lewis is pervasively lyrical in the D minor Concerto. The chordal edifice of the second theme, for instance, is imbued with a melting legato that rises and falls with the contours of fine singing. The beauty of Lewis's sound is evident throughout, but especially at the transition into the development, where the piano's protesting cascade of octaves rings like chiming bells. As the first movement winds down before the final sprint to the finish, Lewis veils his sound and stretches the tempo to create a grippingly suspenseful aura of anticipation.

Following the first movement's *Sturm und Drang*, the *Adagio* unfolds with unadorned simplicity. Nothing here of the tragic utterance, excruciating suspensions or emotional catharsis in Schnabel's 1938 account with Szell and the LPO. The affective weight is instead shifted to the *Rondo*, which Lewis embarks upon with jaunty folksiness. Full of contrasts, the finale exudes a youthful vigour and strength that appropriately evokes the heroic.

In the Four Ballades, Op 10, Lewis creates scintillating textures of stunning clarity, everywhere seeking to highlight Brahms's penchant for polyphony and subtle voicing. He's not big on breathing pauses, however, preferring to indicate phrases with a fresh energy pulse within the continuous sound sustained by pedal or fingers. Lewis lovingly lingers over details, discovering interesting effects of light and shadow seldom encountered in these pieces. The strategy's downside is that the Ballades' modest structures seem freighted with affective content that stretches their load-bearing capacity to the limit.

For a Brahms D minor Concerto of manifold beauties that nonetheless remains safely within the bounds of received wisdom, this account could scarcely be bettered. If, on the other hand, you prefer a reconsideration of the score from the ground up, resulting in a naked, no-holds-barred account, rich with details that never impede the inexorable momentum, then the 2013 Hough/Wigglesworth collaboration is your choice. **Patrick Rucker**

Piano Concerto No 1 – selected comparison:

Hough, Salzburg Mozarteum Orch, M Wigglesworth
(1/14) (HYPE) CDA67961

Chopin

Piano Concerto No 1, Op 11

Grigory Sokolov *pf*

Munich Philharmonic Orchestra / Witold Rowicki

Sony Classical © 88875 19472-2 (43' • ADD)

Recorded 1977. From Eurodisc ● 66928



This probably doesn't need comparisons, it was suggested when I was offered this disc

to review. How true: what would be the point of comparing anything with a disc lasting a mere 43 minutes, featuring a less-than-pristine piano and a rather unremarkable orchestra? Except that this is Grigory Sokolov. And his concerto recordings are rarer than hen's teeth, the pianist having long ago declared that shortage of rehearsal time meant such accounts would always fall short of his almost impossibly exacting standards.

This Chopin First Concerto dates from 1977, when Sokolov was 27, and it's a remarkable document on many levels. If the initial impression of the Munich Philharmonic is that it's somewhat thick-sounding in the string department, with

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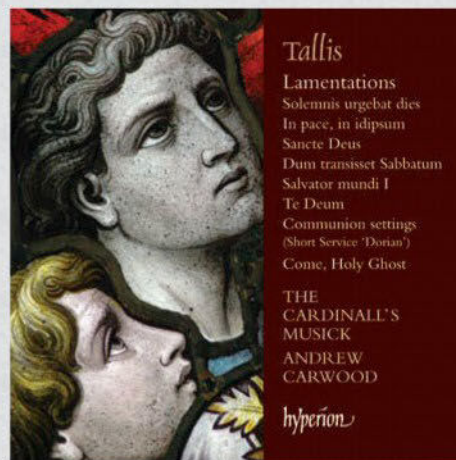
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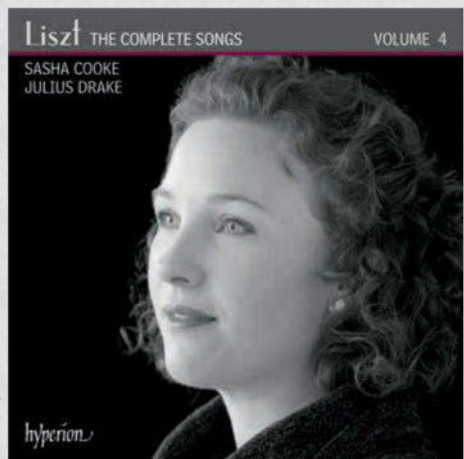
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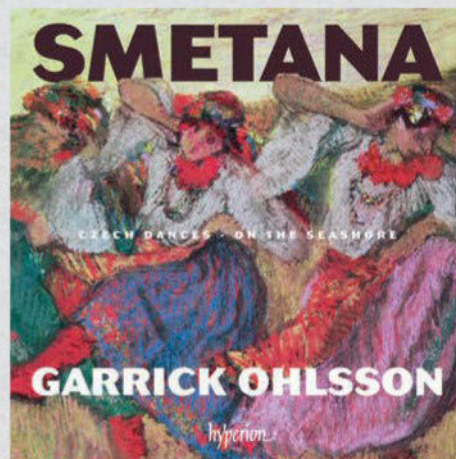
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unfashionably fulsome vibrato in the woodwind (the flutes in particular), that's offset by the forward drive and sense of conviction brought to the *tutti*s by Witold Rowicki, a fine conductor of this music. He sets up a sense of the tragic epic in the first movement, which is in accord with Sokolov's own view. Yet, despite his towering pianism, the Russian doesn't dominate the proceedings – he can go from a roar down to the most velvety *pianissimo* in a moment, and it's at the points where the music is most withdrawn that you experience the full magic of this interpretation. Just sample the first movement at 6'47", when the orchestra falls silent, or the luminously tender dialogue led by the piano at 11'39". Everywhere there's a sense of the music unfolding with such inevitability that there's never any danger of finding yourself waiting for the next piano entry, as can sometimes happen.

And then there's the slow movement. When it begins, you may think 'too slow', but – like Richter – Sokolov can convince at speeds that would leave mere mortals sounding heavy-footed, and it unfolds as a song, unhurried and mesmeric. Every harmonic shading is given due thought without ever seeming over-intellectualised, and the dying bars are wondrous.

Rowicki lets rip in the finale, contrasting slashing string phrases with euphonious wind, while Sokolov is steely one moment, deliquescent the next. He doesn't spare the orchestra in terms of rubato but they hang on for dear life. Others may seek to charm more in this movement, but this vision is darker, the *krakowiak* elements given with an unflinching rawness. Yes, at times the piano itself isn't exactly pretty, but that's beside the point.

So no comparisons. An extraordinary document, with Sokolov's integrity and humanity illuminating every bar.

Harriet Smith

Dvořák · Martinů

Dvořák Cello Concerto, Op 104 B191

Martinů Cello Concerto No 1

Christian Poltéra *vc* **Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Thomas Dausgaard**
BIS (F) BIS2157 (63' • DDD/DSD)



It's no surprise that the Zurich-born cellist Christian Poltéra is a chamber music

devotee. Even his big soloistic statements are strikingly ego-free, and these recordings of Czech concertos make the point. Poltéra clearly doesn't have much

time for self-indulgence or pompousness. In fact, he doesn't have much time here full stop; these performances go by at a surprising lick. We're left in no doubt of his exuberance and his refreshingly straightforward approach.

It pays off, to an extent, in Dvořák's B minor Concerto, where Poltéra always keeps the finishing line in view. He gives us seamless, breathless phrases, a clear sense of over-arching structure and plenty of vigour, punching out his first entry with a resounding 'smack'. What he doesn't give us is heart-on-sleeve abandon. And that's fine, for the most part; there is nothing to be gained in this piece from navel-gazing. Still, there are points – the wind-down to the second movement; the first entrance of the folksong 'Lass mich allein' in the third – when one can't help longing for the kind of poeticism, the sheer emotional depth, that make Steven Isserlis's and Alisa Weilerstein's recordings such a joy.

That kind of poeticism doesn't fit the disc's second offering. Martinů's First Cello Concerto was originally conceived as a chamber concerto, and even after the composer orchestrated it, it retained a sense of Baroque poise. It needs, above all, a clean, elegant approach, and that's what Poltéra provides. He makes this fiendishly difficult piece sound easy, smoothly negotiating the labyrinthine harmonies, injecting a sense of lift. He eschews all sentimentality. But he also recognises that, for all its understatement, this is highly focused, highly charged music. The first movement explodes like a pack of fireworks; the second stands out for its lyrical intensity. It makes for a thrilling performance, not enough to outshine Raphael Wallfisch's outstanding reading, but enough to stand alongside it.

Hannah Nepil

Dvořák – selected comparisons:

Isserlis, Mabler CO, Harding (10/13) (HYPE) CDA67917
Weilerstein, Czech PO, Bělohlávek

(7/14, 9/14) (DECC) 478 5705DH or 478 6757DX6

Martinů – selected comparison:

Wallfisch, Czech PO, Bělohlávek

(4/92⁸, 12/09) (CHAN) CHAN10547

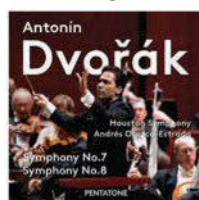
Dvořák

Symphonies – No 7, Op 70 B141; No 8, Op 88 B163

Houston Symphony Orchestra /

Andrés Orozco-Estrada

Pentatone (F) PTC5186 578 (77' • DDD/DSD)



Big-boned and big-hearted, Dvořák's late symphonic music has found a good match in

the Houston Symphony – on the whole. For when it comes to sheer vitality and warmth, this Texan ensemble doesn't hold back. Nor does it pass up opportunities to squeeze out every last decibel.

In a symphony often described as 'Wagnerian', that trait should serve them well. So it's lucky that Dvořák's Seventh, with its operatic trajectory and thunderous climaxes, fits the bill. Andrés Orozco-Estrada's is an interpretation full of theatricality, with a sure sense of the monumental. It's all there in the broad sense, in his far-sighted approach to structure and pacing. It comes out, too, on a local level: in the sweeping vistas of the opening movement, the stabbing violence he brings to the Scherzo and, most of all, the raging culmination to the finale. What doesn't always come across is the sense of refinement so noticeable in Marin Alsop's release with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Her approach to the Scherzo yokes a sense of drama with a lightness and charm that eludes Orozco-Estrada, and for all the warmth in his take on the symphony's emotional centrepiece – the *Andante* – it doesn't quite shimmer like Alsop's.

The Eighth Symphony, too, could do with a wider palette. At times, the Houston is all brawn at the expense of flexibility, not least in the opening few bars, where Manfred Honeck and the Pittsburgh Symphony find much more nuance. There are some arresting moments of softness – in the woodwinds' delicate shaping of the birdcalls, for example, and the tiptoeing of the strings in the Scherzo. For the most part, though, what we admire is the power of the orchestral *tutti*s. Here is a thrilling first movement, a strikingly muscular *Andante*, a finale that takes ogre-like strides. Even if some of it verges on the brash, there's no denying that Orozco-Estrada knows how to fire up his army.

Hannah Nepil

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Baltimore SO, Alsop (8/10) (NAXO) 8 572112

Symphony No 8 – selected comparison:

Pittsburgh SO, Honeck (A/14) (REFE) FR710

Fuchs

Symphonies – No 1, Op 37; No 2, Op 45

WDR Symphony Orchestra, Cologne /

Karl-Heinz Steffens

CPO (F) CPO777 830-2 (70' • DDD)



'What a delightful man,' quotes the booklet-note of this CPO disc of

symphonies by Robert Fuchs. And yes, he does come across that way: the teacher of (among many others) Wolf, Mahler, Sibelius and Korngold, and a rare universally liked figure in the musical snakepit of late Habsburg Vienna, where his genial style led to his being dubbed Serenaden-Fuchs. And if you've heard the Naxos recordings of his five orchestral serenades, there's a fair chance that you've already succumbed to his understated charm.

Fuchs seems to have taken his symphonies altogether more seriously – well, the first movements, anyway. In the lyrical opening theme of the First, you can almost hear him tweaking and teasing his melody to make it more susceptible to development. In the Second, premiered in 1887 when Fuchs was 40, he opens with a foursquare, rather stiff fanfare motif. In both works it isn't long before he's easing into a second group in lilting thirds and sixths, and his main influence just sings out: Brahms.

But it's Brahms on a sunny day, and these two symphonies are at their most enjoyable and distinctive when Fuchs starts to relax: the little rustic dialogue for woodwinds and horn after 2'30" in the first movement of the First, say, or the languorous minuet (tr 7) that serves as the slow movement of the Second. Karl-Heinz Steffens and the WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln handle these moments with character and warmth; in fact the playing throughout is engaging and expressive, and Fuchs's ebullient finales really dance. For sound quality, too, this easily surpasses the only other currently available recording (Manfred Müssauer's 1995 disc on Thorofon). Recommendable performances of two very worthwhile rarities: in other words, CPO doing what it does best. **Richard Bratby**

Gemmingen • Gossec

Gemmingen Violin Concertos ^a – No 3; No 4

Gossec Symphony, Op 6 No 2^b

^aKolja Lessing *vn* **Munich Radio Orchestra /**

^aUlf Schirmer, ^bSebastian Weigle

CPO (P) CPO777 866-2 (68' • DDD)



Ernst von Gemmingen cuts an intriguing figure. Born in 1759, he was a violin-playing

German aristocrat who combined a series of administrative and advisory court roles with as much music-making as he could cram in, aided by a rich music library stocked with virtually all the string quartets of Haydn and Boccherini as well as several Mozart first editions. So far, so average-Joe-musical-aristocrat, you might say. Only in 1800,

aged 40, he composed four violin concertos, which appear to be the only four works he ever wrote. Plus, the plot thickening further, they're not amateur scribbles but instead engaging, structurally interesting works that combine Classical Italianate style and early Romantic *bel canto* lyricism with virtuoso solo violin-writing. As for whether they're as visionary and destined for wider popularity as these CD notes insist, I'm not sure, but this premiere studio recording of the second two (following on from the same team's premiere recording of the first pair, issued in 2012) presents them with such warmth and *joie de vivre* that we can just park that discussion and get on with enjoying them at face value.

Kolja Lessing is light, lithe, strong and vigorous of tone in Gemmingen's mostly high-register writing, his ornamentations almost clinically exact. He attacks the fireworks with relish, really dances through celebratory-sounding movements such as the Third Concerto's bouncing final Rondo, and sings through the slow movements' long lines; just listen to the Fourth Concerto's *Adagio*. The cadenzas – his own – are a seamless stylistic fit too. Still, for me it's probably the orchestra who get the lion's share of the credit for selling this music; warmly effervescent and exact, whether in passages which caress or skip, they're truly magnificent.

On the back of this lot, Gossec's symphony, probably written 40 years earlier in France, feels like a rather strange-fitting and ordinary postscript, much as Weigle and the orchestra present it in the best possible light. **Charlotte Gardner**

Granados

Marcha de los vencidos. Suite sobre cantos gallegos. Torrijos – incidental music^a

^aCor Madrigal; **Barcelona Symphony Orchestra / Pablo González**

Naxos (B) 8 573263 (55' • DDD • T/t)



Enrique Granados was a victim of the Great War: drowned with his wife in March 1916

after his ferry was torpedoed by a U-boat. There's a sense about his music of promise unfulfilled – not helped by the fact that his piano masterpiece *Goyescas* has understandably overshadowed his orchestral works. This new Naxos recording is apparently the first in a new series of Granados orchestral discs that should help redress the balance.

Don't expect castanets and *cante jondo*, though. The three works on this rather

short disc are Romantic nationalism with the emphasis on the Romantic rather than the national. The opening *Marcha de los vencidos* sets the tone, a sombre 'March of the Defeated' whose chromaticism and atmospheric orchestral language hint as much at Bayreuth as at Barcelona.

The incidental music for Fernando Periquet's historical drama *Torrijos* makes effective use of a chorus amid its piquant harmonies and martial fanfares, but the *Suite sobre cantos gallegos* of 1899 is the real discovery: four movements on an expansive scale, treating folk material in a rich, expressive idiom, imaginatively orchestrated. It's like an Iberian equivalent of Grieg's *Symphonic Dances*, and, like all the works on this disc, it's recorded here for the first time.

Under Pablo González, the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra play with style and evident affection – listen to how freely the oboist phrases the melody at the opening of tr 7. The recording sounds natural, with a wide dynamic range that slightly favours the orchestra over the chorus. Hispanophiles should certainly hear this, though it'll appeal to anyone who enjoys neglected late Romantic music of the Karłowicz, Alfvén or Fibich variety.

Richard Bratby

Grieg • Tchaikovsky

Grieg Piano Concerto, Op 16

Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No 1, Op 23

Denis Kozhukhin *pf* **Berlin Radio Symphony**

Orchestra / Vassily Sinaisky

Pentatone (P) PTC5186 566 (65' • DDD/DSD)



After rubbing your eyes and maybe even hitting your forehead with the palm of your

hand a few times to convince yourself that, yes indeed, in fact a young pianist has chosen to make his concerto recording debut with the Tchaikovsky and Grieg concertos, go ahead and have a listen. Denis Kozhukhin, who took first prize at the 2010 Queen Elisabeth, here partners with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra under Vassily Sinaisky. Out of repertoire that has been celebrated, picked over and just about played to death over the course of almost a century and a half, they create magic.

To call Kozhukhin a fastidious pianist is perhaps misleading – immaculate may be the better word. He never overplays and he's no speed freak. He's never tempted to distort a phrase in order to make a rhetorical point. Above all, he is natural, and this naturalness



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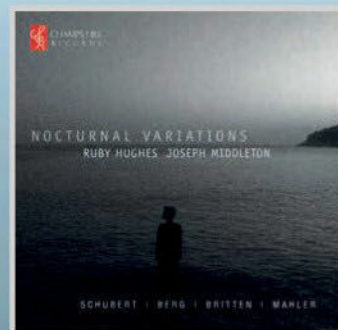


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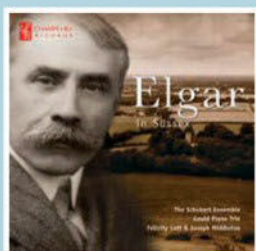
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Unaffected simplicity and directness: Denis Kozhukhin makes his concerto debut in Tchaikovsky and Grieg

allows him to create an impression of unaffected simplicity and directness. Of course, this could only be achieved by deeply cultivated musical instincts and a technique as developed and varied as it is unobtrusive. His inerrant rhythmic sense is pliant yet taut; his sound unalloyed silver. Listening to Kozhukhin, you're left with one thing: the music – incontestable, complete. Sinaisky and the Berliners are fully complicit in this endeavour, providing accompaniments of extraordinary sensitivity. Savour, for instance, the rich sound of the woodwinds throughout the Tchaikovsky or the warmth of the cellos in the slow movement of the Grieg.

But why continue grasping for superlatives? Everyone has personal favourites for each of these concertos – Grainger/Stokowski, Novaes/Swarowsky, Rubinstein/Wallenstein for Grieg; Cliburn/Kondrashin, Argerich/Kondrashin, Gilels/Reiner for Tchaikovsky, to name but a few – and I don't suggest this new CD will necessarily supersede any of them. But if a finale to the Tchaikovsky concerto that is more a colourful folk dance than a bombastic speed race, or a slow movement of the Grieg Concerto that sings of young love in a better climate seem appealing, I urge you to skip the mildly apologetic

booklet-notes and sample this disc. I don't think you'll be disappointed. **Patrick Rucker**

Haydn

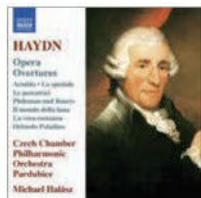
'Opera Overtures'

Overtures and sinfonias to *Acide e Galatea*, *L'anima del filosofo, ossia Orfeo ed Euridice*, *Armida*, *La fedeltà premiata*, *Der Götterrath*, *L'incontro improvviso*, *L'infedeltà delusa*, *L'isola disabitata*, *Il mondo della luna*, *Orlando Paladino*, *Le pescatrici*, *Philemon und Baucis*, *Lo speciale and La vera costanza*

Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra,

Pardubice / Michael Halász

Naxos © 8 573488 (79' • DDD)



Haydn was a somewhat prolific composer (and performer) of operas for his Esterházy patrons. Ever modest, he nevertheless knew the worth of his operatic output, even if he abandoned composing for the theatre on hearing Mozart's da Ponte operas. This disc provides nigh-on 80 minutes of curtain-raisers and proves that he took this kind of composition every bit as seriously as he did his symphonies and quartets.

Michael Halász and his players from Pardubice (an industrial city about 60 miles east of Prague) are thoroughly decent advocates for this music. Perhaps there's a hint of unsureness in some trickier string passages but the woodwind offer sweet commentaries and the horns – all-important as the Eszterháza band often didn't contain trumpets – ring out joyfully. Halász is experienced in Haydn and knows exactly how this music should go, so there's none of the limpness that marred odd volumes in this label's symphony cycle.

There are some surprises, too. *Sturm and Drang* plays no small part in these works – in the Overture to *L'isola disabitata*, where it portrays the shipwreck that maroons the opera's two dippy, lovelorn sisters in, for example, or the bipartite opener for *Philemon und Baucis*, whose austere first part is balanced by an *Andante poco allegro* of winsome sweetness. And the Prologue to *Der Götterrath* turns out to be the first movement of Symphony No 50 (just as the Sinfonia to *La fedeltà premiata* later came to rest as the finale of Symphony No 73). There's not a duff note here and, despite the odd string lapse, not a moment that isn't an utterly joyful account of Haydn's wit and wisdom.

David Thresher

Herbert

Cello Concertos^a – No 1, Op 8; No 2, Op 30.

Irish Rhapsody

^aMark Kosower VC

Ulster Orchestra / JoAnn Falletta

Naxos © 8 573517 (64' • DDD)



Casals is generally credited with making the great leap forward in cello-playing, but if

you listen to Victor Herbert's 1912 recording of Daniel van Goens's flashy Scherzo it might persuade you that the Irish-born German-trained composer got there first.

He toured as a virtuoso cellist from the 1870s before achieving even greater fame as a composer of operettas. Hardly surprising, then, that both concertos for his instrument combine strong melodic appeal with technically challenging solo parts. Both have the standard three movements. The D major Concerto (No 1) was composed in 1884, just two years before Herbert and his new wife emigrated to America. This is only its second recording. The E minor (No 2) was premiered in 1894 (it was hearing this work that finally

persuaded Dvořák, Herbert's boss at New York's National Conservatory, to compose his own concerto for the instrument).

The latter is no longer such a rarity on disc. Georges Miquelle's pioneering 1962 account with Howard Hanson, originally paired with Bloch's *Schelomo* (Mercury, 10/62), can now be found either with the Sinfonia in G by Johann Peter (Naxos download) or Grofé's *Grand Canyon Suite* (Mercury, 10/95). Julian Lloyd Webber's version with the LSO and Mackerras (EMI, 2/87) is no longer available; Yo-Yo Ma (Sony, 4/96), Gautier Capuçon (Erato, 4/09) and James Kreger (Guild, 4/02) all couple it with the Dvořák. Only this new recording and that by Lynn Harrell with the ASMF and Sir Neville Marriner offer both Herbert concertos. Mark Kosower is a wonderfully eloquent soloist who is a joy to hear, especially in the feisty company of JoAnn Falletta, though I shall remain loyal to Harrell, the more characterful player of the two, with a warmer, fuller tone.

Decca's bonuses are arrangements by Sam Dennison for cello solo and strings of five short, charming piano solos by Herbert. Naxos offers the 1892 *Irish Rhapsody* for grand orchestra (15'58"), a high-spirited bit of old Oirishry, a medley that includes nonetheless a most affecting

arrangement of 'Rich and rare were the gems she wore'. And at half the price of the Decca disc, the newcomer is warmly recommended. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

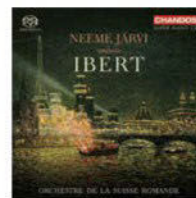
Harrell, ASMF, Marriner (10/88) (DECC) 417 672-2DH

Ibert

Bacchanale. Escales.... Divertimento. Féérique. Hommage à Mozart. Ouverture de fête. Sarabande pour Dulcinée. Suite symphonique, 'Paris'

Suisse Romande Orchestra / Neeme Järvi

Chandos © CHSA5168 (82' • DDD/DSD)



Ibert always claimed he followed no compositional schools or aesthetic

movements, though his reputation is hampered by charges of eclecticism, and his work between his gravitation towards post-Impressionism (Ravel was a close friend) and a fondness for the jazz-inflected modernism of Les Six (Milhaud and Honegger were fellow composition students).

Neeme Järvi examines the apparent contradictions by contextualising his two best-known works, the Debussian *Escales...*

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SCHUMANN'S CONCERTOS

David Threasher listens to the latest batch of recordings of concertante works by the troubled composer



Thomas Zehetmair conducts the Chamber Orchestra of Paris in his new Schumann disc on ECM

Schumann's Violin Concerto has one of the strangest histories of all great Romantic works. His last piece for orchestral forces, it was inspired by a meeting with the young Joseph Joachim in 1853. 'May Beethoven's example incite you, O wondrous guardian of the richest treasures,' wrote the 22-year-old virtuoso, 'to carve out a work from your deep quarry and bring something to light for us poor violinists.'

This coincided with a particularly stressful period in Schumann's personal and professional life, not least the fallout from his deficiencies as a conductor with the Düsseldorf Musikverein. He was plagued by illness; but work on music for Joachim – two sonatas, the *Phantasie*, Op 131, and the Concerto – invigorated him and he remarked often on his ability to concentrate diligently on the music for his young new fiddler friend.

Joachim never performed the concerto, though. With Schumann's decline and suicide attempt, the violinist considered the work to be 'morbid' and the product of a failing mind; he wrote that it betrayed 'a certain exhaustion, which attempts to wring out the last resources of spiritual energy'. This attitude evidently rubbed off on Clara and Brahms, who omitted it from the complete edition of Schumann's works. Joachim retained the manuscript and bequeathed it to the Prussian State Library in Berlin upon his death in 1907,

stating in his will that it should be neither played nor published until 1956, 100 years after Schumann's death.

It was in 1933, however, that it came to light. This is where the story turns very peculiar. The violinist sisters Jelly d'Arányi and Adila Fachiri held a séance in which the shade of Schumann asked that they recover and perform a lost piece of his; then Joachim's ghost handily popped up to mention that they might look in the Prussian State Library. A copy of the score was sent to Yehudi Menuhin, who pronounced it the 'missing link' in the violin literature between Beethoven and Brahms, and announced he would give its premiere in October 1937. D'Arányi claimed precedence on account of Schumann's imprimatur (albeit from the other side), and the German State invoked their copyright on the work and demanded a German soloist have the honour. Georg Kulenkampff was eventually entrusted with the world premiere; Menuhin introduced it in the US and d'Arányi in the UK.

It's long been considered a problematic work, owing partly to Joachim's opinion of it, partly to some supposedly heavy scoring and partly to the awkward gait of the polonaise finale, which can too easily become a graveyard for dogged soloists. Nevertheless, it's something of a rite of passage for recording violinists, and two of the finest present it on new discs, as

Patricia Kopatchinskaja goes head-to-head with **Thomas Zehetmair**. Kopatchinskaja (with the Cologne WDR SO under Heinz Holliger in Vol 4 of his series of Schumann's 'Complete Symphonic Works') displays the full range of sounds she is able to draw from her instrument, spinning something almost hallucinatory in the slow movement. The tone employed by Zehetmair (directing the Orchestre de Chambre de Paris) is more focused, more centred, as would appear to be his outlook on the work: all three movements are 40 seconds to a minute faster than Kopatchinskaja. Nevertheless, her concentration and imagination sustain the performance, and Holliger and his players follow her lead in creating some wondrous sounds, demonstrating yet again that Schumann's orchestration isn't as leaden as it's often made out to be.

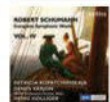
On first hearing, I wasn't sure if I'd wish to revisit Kopatchinskaja's disc in a hurry. But there's something magnetic about her vision of the work, about the abandon with which she plays, never shunning an ugly tone when it's called for. Zehetmair's tidier, more dapper performance avoids such ugliness and makes choosing between the two an invidious choice. Holliger couples an energetic performance of the Piano Concerto with Dénes Várjon, incorporating in the first movement some features of the earlier *Phantasie* on which it was based, and which some might prefer to the self-consciously

individual recent readings by Ingrid Fliter (reviewed on page 40) or Stephen Hough (Hyperion, 4/16). Zehetmair offers a lithe, spontaneous *Spring Symphony* and the fiddle *Phantasie* that Joachim *did* play.

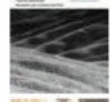
Pat Kop also offers this latter work, on Vol 5 of Holliger's series. Again, she takes a more spacious, more reactive approach than Zehetmair; elsewhere on the disc, Alexander Lonquich is similarly more inclined to let the music breathe in Schumann's two single-movement *concertante* piano works than, say, the tauter Jan Lisiecki (DG, 1/16). The real draw here, though, is the *Konzertstück* for four horns and orchestra, in a performance that makes a truly joyful noise, even if it's perhaps less sleek than Barenboim in Chicago or less steampunk than John Eliot Gardiner with a quartet of period piston horns.

These days, you're as likely to find – on disc, at least – the Cello Concerto co-opted by violinists. **Jean-Guihen Queyras** returns it to the bass clef, though, completing the series of the three concertos and piano trios with Isabelle Faust, Alexander Melnikov and the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra under Pablo Heras-Casado. Queyras gives the best possible case for the concerto, making a virtue of the relative short-windedness of period instruments but exploiting their greater ensemble clarity. Where the gut strings really tell, though, is in the First Piano Trio – especially at those points at which Schumann asks for new sounds, such as in the first-movement development, where he tells the string players to play at the bridge for an eerie, glassy sound. I've enjoyed all the discs in this series without necessarily preferring them to certain older (modern-instrument) favourites. The combination of Queyras's concerto and the wonderful, driven D minor Trio, though, leads me to suspect that this is the most persuasive of the three. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Schumann Vn Conc. Pf Conc
Kopatchinskaja; Várjon; Holliger
Audite (P) AUDITE97 717



Schumann Vn Conc. Sym No 1, etc
Zehetmair; Paris CO
ECM New Series (P) 481 1369



Schumann Concertante Wks
Sols; WDR SO / Holliger
Audite (P) AUDITE97 718



Schumann Vc Conc. Pf Trio No 1
Queyras, Faust, Melnikov et al
HM (P) (CD + DVD) HMC90 2197

(1920), inspired by Mediterranean ports of call during Ibert's First World War naval service, and the popular *Divertissement* of 1930, derived from his incidental music for a production of Eugène Labiche's *An Italian Straw Hat*. Järvi gives us a darker *Divertissement* than usual. The humour is mordant rather than breezy, the tone at times acerbic. But the shimmering *Nocturne*, with its poised piano solo, transports us into a sensual world more fully explored in *Escales...*, and the latter gets one of its finest performances on disc, superbly nuanced, and quite exquisitely played.

It's the rest of the CD, though, that makes it special. The *Suite symphonique*, 'Paris' swerves garishly between the mechanism of *Pacific 231* and the classiest of foxtrots and waltzes in its depiction of a teeming metropolis. The sad, haunting *Sarabande pour Dulcinée* comes from the soundtrack for George Pabst's 1933 film *Don Quichotte*, originally offered to Ravel, who was too ill to undertake it. Ibert was also a master of the *pièce d'occasion*, and Järvi includes the riotous *Bacchanale*, written to mark the 10th anniversary of the Third Programme – one wonders just what the BBC made of it – and the grandiose *Ouverture de fête*, commissioned in 1940, alongside Strauss's *Japanische Festmusik*, for the 2600th anniversary of the founding of the Japanese imperial dynasty. Ibert emerges from it all as a fine composer, whose unity lies in his almost impudent diversity, and who is often far from frivolous as some have maintained. And the disc allows Järvi to show off his Swiss orchestra to perfection. Very fine.

Tim Ashley

Khachaturian • Tchaikovsky

Khachaturian Piano Concerto

Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No 2, Op 44

Xiayin Wang *pf* Royal Scottish

National Orchestra / Peter Oundjian

Chandos (P) CHSA5167 (76' • DDD/DSD)



It's always a pleasure when, like Fry's Five Boys Chocolate (if you're old enough

to remember), realisation exceeds anticipation. From the first bar (no chocolate pun intended), you know that this brilliant Chinese-American pianist is the business. As on her earlier concerto disc of Copland, Barber and Gershwin (12/13) with the same partners, she leads from the front throughout to exhilarating effect.

For those to whom such things are important (as I know they are from a

review I penned last year of Denis Matsuev in the Tchaikovsky Second), the score is played complete in its original version – ie no cuts in the first movement and with the 16 bars included at the end of the second movement which Tchaikovsky removed in its revised form. To help us find our way during the lengthy first movement, Chandos has helpfully added three entry points. The two soloists in the second movement are credited, unlike those on Matsuev's recording, who, however, I marginally prefer for their more *espressivo* solos.

The Khachaturian is, presumably, a replacement for Chandos of its well-regarded recording with Constantine Orbelian, Neeme Järvi and the same orchestra (11/87). Sumptuously engineered, the newcomer, unlike several other much-vaunted versions (Berezovsky) in inferior sound (Kapell, Lympany), takes Khachaturian at his word as far as tempi are concerned, markedly similar to the live performance conducted by the composer with Nikolai Petrov in 1977 (variously available). Chandos, as before, has gone to the trouble of hiring a flexatone for the spectral second movement (the player, alas, is not credited). Xiayin Wang plays the stamina-sapping solo part with all the conviction and exuberance needed, though no one has ever quite matched the climax of the first movement cadenza as recorded by Peter Katin, the LSO and Hugo Rignold back in 1959 (available to download) – a thrilling moment 'captured in one lucky take,' so Katin once told me. If you do not have a recording of the Tchaikovsky, then this is up with the very best; likewise the Khachaturian. Paired together, it's a no-brainer.

Jeremy Nicholas

Tchaikovsky – selected comparison:

Matsuev, Mariinsky Orch, Gergiev

(4/14) (MARI) MAR0548

Krenek

'Complete Piano Concertos, Vol 1'

Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 18;

No 2, Op 81; No 3, Op 107

Mikhail Korzhev *pf*

English Symphony Orchestra / Kenneth Woods

Toccata Classics (P) TOCCO323 (69' • DDD)



Composers born in 1900, such as Aaron Copland, Kurt Weill and Ernst Krenek,

were in the front line of those who, in the 1920s, needed to respond to the diverse challenges of the great modernist pioneers –

Schoenberg and Stravinsky in particular. The Class of 1900 followed Schoenberg and Stravinsky in seeking to retain a radical core without taking the avant-garde route to ephemerality and inaccessibility – and none more so than Krenek, whose journey from Imperial Vienna to California (where he died in 1991) paralleled his musical evolution from the questing progressiveness of his youth to something more pragmatic, even postmodern, in the years after 1945.

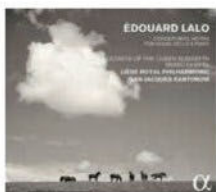
Within a catalogue of close to 250 works, Krenek's first three piano concertos – Nos 1 and 2 recorded here for the first time – fit this profile neatly enough. No 1 (1923) is brashly youthful in some ways – even a bit slapdash – but also has substance, with plenty of boldly projected, rather Hindemith-like harmony and counterpoint. Clear-cut rhythms and melodic shapes signify Krenek's determination to avoid excessive complexity; and when he adopts the 12-note technique, as in the Second Concerto (1937), his affinity for Schoenberg-like allusions to Baroque textures and Classical forms keeps the music's feet on firmly communicative ground. Energetically characterful, the more economical Third Concerto (1946) has comparable virtues: the lively interplay of solo and orchestra is the result of designing the work to be directed by a piano-playing conductor.

These well-sprung performances benefit from the sharply focused acoustic of the Wyastone Concert Hall. Conductor Kenneth Woods might occasionally have lightened textures and adopted brisker tempi – for example, in the Second Concerto's second movement. But with a forthright and eloquent soloist in Mikhail Korzhev, there's no mistaking the edgy fervour of Krenek at his best. Well-judged booklet essays add to this disc's appeal.

Arnold Whittall

Lalo

Symphonie espagnole, Op 21^a. *Guitare*, Op 28^b. *Fantaisie norvégienne*^c. *Romance-sérénade*^c. *Fantaisie-ballet*^c. *Introduction and Scherzo*^c. *Violin Concerto*, Op 20^b. *Cello Concerto*^d. *Concerto russe*, Op 29^e. *Piano Concerto*^f
^aElina Buksha, ^bLorenzo Gatto, ^cWoo Hyung Kim, ^dVladyslava Luchenko vns ^eOri Epstein vc ^fNathanaël Guoin pf Liège Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Jean-Jacques Kantorow
 Alpha ® ③ ALPHA233 (3h 9' • DDD)



Much admired in his lifetime, Lalo's *concertante* works still form the basis of his

reputation thanks to the abiding popularity of the Cello Concerto and, above all, the *Symphonie espagnole*. They were mostly composed in the 1870s and owe their existence largely to Lalo's friendship with Pablo Sarasate, to whom he offered the Violin Concerto in 1873. The premiere, the following January, made Lalo, hitherto primarily known for his chamber music, both successful and fashionable. The *Symphonie espagnole* was composed, effectively in gratitude, later in 1874 and the *Fantaisie norvégienne*, at Sarasate's suggestion, in 1878. The sequence came to a halt the following year, however, when Sarasate declined the *Concerto russe*, though he later took the *Fantaisie-ballet* on themes from *Namouna* (1885) into his repertoire. The Cello Concerto was written for Adolphe Fischer in 1877. Louis Diémer gave the first performance of the Piano Concerto, a late work, in 1889.

In some respects, they were groundbreaking. None exploits virtuosity for its own sake, and Lalo strives throughout for expressive integration between soloist and orchestra – too much so, perhaps, in the Piano Concerto, where the pianist at times becomes an ensemble player. The evocations of Russia, Norway and Spain – in *Guitare* and the *Romance-sérénade* as well as in the *Symphonie espagnole* – edge towards programme music, and the exoticism of Lalo's orchestral writing is well to the fore.

Made in Belgium last year, this set allows us to hear them complete. Jean-Jacques Kantorow conducts, and the soloists are drawn from the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel in Brussels, founded in 1939 to provide facilities for extensive study for talented young musicians. Kantorow drives the music hard but the Liège Royal Philharmonic sound appealingly suave, and Lalo's trademark snap-chord accentuations are all exactly in place. The soloists don't disappoint, though some face stiff competition. Lorenzo Gatto's fiercely sensual *Symphonie espagnole* is hampered by a close-ish recording that catches occasional gasps of effort. You may prefer Sarah Chang (EMI, 5/96) or Christian Tetzlaff (Virgin, 7/94) here. Ori Epstein is wonderfully eloquent in his ruminative account of the Cello Concerto but doesn't quite have the authority of Jacqueline du Pré with Barenboim (EMI, 11/95).

Pride of place, perhaps, goes to Woo Hyung Kim, who plays the F major Concerto and *Guitare*, and to Elina Buksha with the *Concerto russe*. Buksha has the more difficult task: the third of the work's four movements conveys the excitement of a standard finale, which can make the

grandiose last movement seem extraneous if not carefully handled. Her commitment, however, is never in doubt: there's real intensity in the *Lento* and dazzling passagework elsewhere. Kim proves a master technician, sweet in tone and ultra-refined in expression. *Guitare* is exquisitely skittish. The F major Concerto lives and breathes with wonderful subtlety.

Vladyslava Luchenko is allocated the *Fantaisie norvégienne* and the remainder of the shorter, more extrovert violin works, which she delivers with consummate dexterity and finesse. Nathanaël Guoin, meanwhile, tackling the Piano Concerto, makes much of Lalo's sometimes ungrateful solo writing with its big chordal progressions and relentlessly hurtling scales. It's a fine achievement overall; and, as with other recent Lalo recordings, you're left wondering why comparatively little of his music forms part of the regular repertoire. **Tim Ashley**

Lutosławski • Brahms

Brahms Piano Quartet No 1, Op 25
 (orch Schoenberg)
Lutosławski Concerto for Orchestra
Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra /
Miguel Harth-Bedoya
 Harmonia Mundi ® ③ HMU80 7668
 (72' • DDD/DSD)

Lutosławski

Concerto for Orchestra.
Little Suite. Symphony No 4
NDR Symphony Orchestra / Krzysztof Urbaniński
 Alpha ® ③ ALPHA232 (56' • DDD)



There can't be many more exuberantly inventive or sheerly enjoyable orchestral showpieces than Lutosławski's Concerto for Orchestra. Written for Witold Rowicki, who gave the world premiere in November 1954 and went on to make an infectiously characterful recording of it with the Warsaw National PO eight years later, the work demands high levels of discipline, stamina and coordination, in which respects neither of these latest contenders is found wanting. Alpha's co-production with NDR brings a vividly natural concert-hall balance, though the very last ounce of clarity is sometimes lacking; detail is rather more explicit on its Harmonia Mundi rival but there's rather less in the way of ambient glow.

On this evidence, Miguel Harth-Bedoya has moulded the Fort Worth SO into an

impressively proficient band, but I do register an extra imaginative flair and subtlety of touch about Krzysztof Urbński's conception which is more likely to draw me back for repeated hearings. For home-grown musicality and keen spirit, it's hard to beat the composer's own wonderfully unforced 1978 version with the Polish National RSO (last sighted on a low-price Warner twofer), and I also have a lot of time for Edward Gardner's admirably spry BBC SO account (Chandos, 12/10). Even so, Urbński more than holds his own in a hotly competitive field.

Moving on to the couplings, Harth-Bedoya maintains the swaggering theme by opting for Schoenberg's orchestration of Brahms's G minor Piano Quartet. The Peruvian puts his eager Texan charges through their paces in what is an eminently enjoyable, unexaggerated account with no want of commitment, as well as a welcome dash of paprika in the zany *Rondo alla zingarese* finale. In other words, if you fancy this particular pairing, there's no real need to hold back. Urbński, on the other hand, sticks with the music of his countryman, and procures wholly excellent renderings of the endearingly folksy, deliciously deft *Little Suite* (whose bright-eyed opening dance bounces along

disarmingly) and the hugely invigorating and enviably concise Fourth Symphony (completed in 1992). Indeed, the latter receives such lucid and dedicated advocacy that one hopes for more Lutosławski from this impressive young conductor. This consistently absorbing Alpha release certainly earns its spurs and can be very warmly recommended. **Andrew Achenbach**

Mahler

Symphony No 1

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra / Yannick Nézet-Séguin

BR-Klassik © 900143 (53' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Herkulessaal, June 26-27, 2014



Although David Gutman may have regretted the absence of the Philadelphia

Orchestra in Yannick Nézet-Séguin's recent recording of Mahler's Tenth Symphony (ATMA Classique, 12/15), there are no such concerns here. The Bavarians, with their long experience of performing Mahler, deliver superbly precise and expressive playing for their guest conductor. Nézet-Séguin's careful

attention to dynamics makes it clear just how much of the first movement is marked *pp* and *ppp*. Details that often make no impression in other interpretations, such as the muted brass chords two bars before fig 15 (10'08"), here make themselves felt and add tension to the performance. Similarly, the tolling tam-tam from 1'22" in the third movement is just loud enough to augment the texture without sounding unduly prominent. At the other end of the dynamic spectrum, Mahler's many *fff* passages are presented with splendid attack and weight. The performance of the finale in particular marries discipline with power and impetus, bringing the symphony to a rousing conclusion.

On the debit side, Nézet-Séguin's interpretation occasionally falls short in terms of warmth and characterisation. For all the verve of the performance of the Scherzo, the Trio comes across as rather prosaic and uninvolved. And although the double bass solo at the start of the third movement is wonderfully sepulchral, Nézet-Séguin's interpretation of the klezmer music is surprisingly deadpan. 'Mit Parodie' Mahler asks, but the players merely deliver the notes as written. Performances of this movement were considerably more interesting when Rafael

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TIMTCHENKO**

NESPRESSO

Julius Bär

Kubelík was in charge. Despite these reservations, however, there's a lot to admire in this new recording, and the sound is suitably clear and spacious. There is no obvious audience noise and applause has been edited out.

Christian Hoskins

Selected comparisons:

Bavarian RSO, Kubelik

(5/68⁸, 2/97) (DG) 449 735-2G0R

Bavarian RSO, Kubelik (4/00) (AUDI) AUDITE95 467

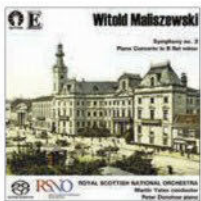
Maliszewski

Piano Concerto, Op 27^a. Symphony No 3, Op 14

^a**Peter Donohoe** *pf*

Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Martin Yates

Dutton Epoch (P) CDLX7325 (71' • DDD/DSD)



As far as I can see, this is the first appearance of Witold Maliszewski's music in

these pages. Briefly, he was born in July 1873 (three months after Rachmaninov) in what is now western Ukraine, studied with Ippolitov-Ivanov (in Tbilisi) and Rimsky-Korsakov (in St Petersburg), and went on to compose about 30 works including five symphonies and his magnum opus, the opera ballet *La Sirène*. He founded the Odessa Conservatory in 1913 (David Oistrakh and Emil Gilels were alumni) and, having emigrated to Poland in 1921, was Chairman of the First International Chopin Piano Competition in 1927. He taught, among others, Witold Lutosławski, and died in 1939.

His Third Symphony, dating from around 1907, is in four movements, with the expected third-movement scherzo replaced by a Theme and (six) Variations. The last of these (*Allegro feroce*) is, in booklet-writer Bret Johnson's words, 'a brilliant display of Maliszewski's genius as an orchestrator'. This is one aspect of the work that makes a strong appeal on first hearing, from the heavy brass choruses of the first and second movements to moments of Mendelssohnian lightness elsewhere. Often the themes and the energy with which they are worked put one in mind of Tchaikovsky. There are many people (conductors among them) who will find this score well worth their while. Meanwhile, this premiere recording must register simply as another feather in Martin Yates's cap.

Maliszewski's Piano Concerto, composed in 1938, has been recorded once before (in 1959 by Jakub Kalecki and Jerzy Gert), though I can't imagine with the same zest and opulence as

presented here in its first digital outing. In three traditional movements, it is essentially a big-boned throwback to the 19th century with plenty of nods to the intervening years (Rachmaninov, Ravel, Hollywood), significant parts for xylophone and glockenspiel, and a particularly dashing solo part seized with relish by the great Peter Donohoe. Close your eyes and there in black-and-white are Conrad Veidt and Bette Davis embracing on a windswept clifftop. It's a blustery, rhapsodic piece, only lacking the outstanding themes of a Rachmaninov or Bortkiewicz to make it stick in the memory. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Mendelssohn · Schumann

Mendelssohn Piano Concerto No 1, Op 25^a.

Overture 'Die schöne Melusine', Op 32

Schumann Piano Concerto, Op 54^a

^a**Ingrid Fliter** *pf*

Scottish Chamber Orchestra / Antonio Méndez

Linn (P) CKD555 (61' • DDD/DSD)



Ingrid Fliter departs from her beloved Chopin for her latest disc on Linn. As on her Chopin concertos, she is partnered by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, this time with Antonio Méndez at the helm. The use of natural horns and trumpets in the orchestra gives it a very particular hue, which is used to great effect, not least in Mendelssohn's *Fair Melusine* overture, in which Méndez relishes the contrasts between the serene and the impassioned.

The Mendelssohn concerto suits Fliter particularly well, and she's alive to the impetuosity of the outer movements, as well as to the work's more poetic elements. Others may be still speedier, not least Jean-Yves Thibaudet in his long-admired recording, but Fliter's command of the drama is second to none. She seizes the music by the scruff of the neck in her very first entry, which has a pleasing muscularity to it, even if Howard Shelley finds greater clarity in the semiquaver passagework that follows. Deftly judged details abound: just sample the cheeky wind interjection (tr 5, 4'35") or the brass fanfares (6'34") just before the close of the movement, which fade to give Fliter the limelight as she leads into the *Andante* – a passage that she judges to perfection. Stephen Hough is also very fine here and I particularly like his flowing tempo for this movement; by contrast Shelley and Thibaudet are both more expansive. Fliter chooses a middle ground and her quiet ardency is very compelling.

In the finale she lets rip, yet never at the expense of clarity (though I do wonder whether her *sforzandos* at the tops of phrases, eg from 1'30" in tr 7, slightly impede the flow. In her hands, though, the Tempo 1 section that takes us to the end of the concerto is splendidly effervescent.

It seems to be a bumper couple of months for the Schumann Concerto, with new accounts from Hough and Dénes Várjon (see page 36) and now Fliter. Febrile is the word that springs to mind, and the entire concerto is all about reactivity (as you'll hear from the off). The wind acquit themselves with great style and personality, and the sense of an intimacy of chamber music-making is everywhere apparent. Yet I do find Fliter can be too interventionist in terms of rubato, particularly in the Intermezzo, and for me it's Shelley who really captures the spirit of this movement. In the finale, Fliter is less inclined to toy with the tempo than Hough, but, for a one-in-a-bar feel, Várjon and Melnikov are both captivating. Recommendable particularly for the Mendelssohn, and wonderfully warmly recorded. **Harriet Smith**

Schumann – selected comparisons:

Shelley, Orch of Opera North (5/09) (CHAN) CHAN10509

Melnikov, Freiburg Baroque Orch, Heras-Casado

(9/15) (HARM) HMC90 2198

Hough, CBSO, Nelsons (4/16) (HYPE) CDA68099

Várjon, WDR SO, Cologne, Holliger

(AUDI) AUDITE97 717 (see page 36)

Mendelssohn Concerto – selected comparisons:

Shelley, LMP (4/94) (CHAN) CHAN9215

Hough, CBSO, Foster (9/97) (HYPE) CDA66969

Thibaudet, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orch, Blomstedt

(A/01) (DECC) 468 600-2DH

Respighi

Ancient Airs and Dances – three suites.

Gli uccelli

Munich Radio Orchestra / Henry Raudales

CPO (P) CPO777 233-2 (65' • DDD)



This is, first and foremost, a thoughtful disc of great charm.

Under violinist-conductor Henry Raudales, the Munich Radio Orchestra approach Respighi's Baroque reworkings with fastidious care and exquisite attention to detail. *Ancient Airs and Dances* comes complete, its three suites carefully differentiated as to tone and mood, tacitly reminding us that they were assembled, written and arranged over a period of 15 years, and that they constitute contrasting exercises in orchestration and sonority.



'Splendidly efferverscent': Ingrid Fliter has recorded concertos by Mendelssohn and Schumann with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra for Linn

The First, for small orchestra and dating from 1917, is done with an almost 18th-century refinement and grace, the rhythms crisp and clean, the big oboe solos at once languid and poised. The more extravagant Second (1923), with its 'Danza rustica' and big closing 'Bergamasco', underscores its blend of sensuality and energetic pastoral with Impressionistic colours in both scoring and harmony: the evocation of the bells of Paris that forms its effective slow movement is both ravishing and touching here. The final suite (1932), for strings alone, has moments of great austerity in its 'Arie di corte' *Andante* and closes in a mood of bittersweet nostalgia. Some may prefer Neville Marriner's more buoyant performance with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra for EMI, though Raudales's restraint is both appealing and persuasive throughout.

His approach to *Gli uccelli*, meanwhile, is altogether more extrovert, and his breezy, almost casual way with the 'Preludio' comes as something of a surprise if you're used to the altogether grander manner of, say, Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra (Sony) here. Later on there's plenty of wit, as well as great tenderness in Respighi's depictions of the dove and the

nightingale, where the scoring becomes lush and there are overtones of the Janiculum section from *Pines of Rome*. Like the rest of the disc, it's played with exceptional beauty, and the recording itself is first-rate. **Tim Ashley**

Ancient Airs and Dances – selected comparisons:

Los Angeles CO, Marriner (6/76⁸) (EMI) 586549-2

Sibelius

Symphonies – No 5, Op 82⁹; No 7, Op 105⁸.

En saga, Op 9

Hallé Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder

Hallé © CDHLL7543 (72' • DDD)

Recorded live at Bridgewater Hall, Manchester,

⁸March 18, 2010, ⁹November 6, 2014



Mark Elder presides over a strikingly lissom and cogent account of the mighty

Fifth. Not only do the Hallé respond with commendable poise, commitment and personality, Elder paces proceedings judiciously, his comparatively fleet-of-foot conception evincing a keen thrust and sparky intellect that put me in mind of the second of Rattle's three versions (with the

CBSO – EMI, 4/88) and Ole Schmidt's trenchant RPO account (Regis, 1/06). Painstaking preparation goes hand in hand with a frequently captivating, almost Mediterranean warmth, particularly in the central *Andante mosso, quasi allegretto*. Listen out, too, for the strings' Barbirolli-like portamento at five bars after fig N (5'13") in the finale, after which the symphony's towering peroration unfolds with both thrilling nobility and a genuine sense of homecoming. A Fifth of undoubted stature, then, both inevitable and involving, truthfully engineered, and certainly meriting the enthusiastic reception it receives from the Bridgewater Hall audience.

En saga was set down the following day in the same venue. By the side of, say, Okko Kamu's bracingly idiomatic Helsinki RSO account (still fresh in my memory from DG's handsome Sibelius Edition, 12/15), Elder's, for all its trim energy and rhythmic snap, perhaps takes a little while to catch fire. However, tension levels rise markedly from two after fig N (8'21") onwards (where the shrieking piccolo registers marvellously), and the work's climactic wild ride likewise generates plenty of giddy

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

NEW FROM NEOS

Richard Whitehouse assesses the present output of a young German contemporary music label

During the nine years of its existence, the Munich-based NEOS label has released some 250 discs which survey a broad range of music from the past 70 years – taking in experimental and cross-genre projects in addition to the more mainstream modernist trends. In all cases, stylish presentation and expertly translated booklet-notes can be taken as given, thus encouraging deeper exploration of such diverse composers as those under consideration here.

One of the label's ongoing series focuses on performances from the Musica Viva concerts held in Munich for seven decades, with Vols 23 and 24 devoted to **Helmut Lachenmann**, whose 80th birthday fell last year. His *...zwei Gefühle...*, *Musik mit Leonardo* (1992) draws on a paraphrase of the artist's own words (spoken by the composer) in a piece whose evoking of the danger and excitement in exploring the unknown typifies Lachenmann's own thinking. *Schreiben* (2004) finds him investigating the structural properties of orchestral timbre and texture in deftly understated term. Both receive assured readings from the Bavarian Radio Symphony (under Peter Eötvös and Susanna Mälkki). *Ausklang* (1985) – Lachenmann's piano concerto *malgré-lui* whose solo part, indebted as much to the pyrotechnics of Charlemagne Palestine as to the European avant-garde, is bracingly dispatched by Pierre-Laurent Aimard, while Jonathan Nott marshals the combative orchestral writing with his customary assurance.

In the almost half-century since his death, **Bernd Alois Zimmermann** (1918–70) has gained a measure of recognition denied him during his lifetime. Although his solo piano music stops short of his full maturity, it does offer a plausible overview of his formative years – from the pithy vignettes of *Extemporale* and robust charm of the folksong permeated *Capriccio* (both 1946), through respectively capricious and introspective studies comprising the two-volume *Enchiridion* (1949 and '52) to the stark yet never merely arid miniatures of *Konfigurationen* (1956). It might be easy to overlook in the context of Zimmermann's radical later works, but this is distinctive, characterful music, to which Andreas

Skouras responds with unflinching poise and charisma.

Often relegated to the 'easy to admire, difficult to love' category,

Charles Wuorinen

(b1938) has amassed a sizeable output in a variety of media whose intellectual rigour does not preclude engaging or playful qualities – as in the sinewy contrapuntal texture of *Harpsichord Divisions* (1968) or the teasing sense of discontinuity of *The Long and the Short* (1969). The emotional trajectory of *Violin Variations* (1972) places audibly greater emphasis on high-flown rhetoric, while *Heart*

Shadow (2005) alights on an expressive subtlety common to many of Wuorinen's more recent works. Anna and Andreas Skouras are the dedicated violinist and keyboardist in this rewarding music, combining in *Six Pieces* (1977) for a cycle whose initially disjunctive contrasts quickly reveal a powerfully cumulative momentum no less typical of this composer.

The music of **Martin Schlumpf** (b1947) offers a more quizzical take on the concept of musical narrative. In the five works here, all written during 2011–14, allusions to Romantic chamber music are often in evidence: Schumann's *Märchenbilder* in the temporal punning of the piano trio *Spiegelbilder*; Brahms's Clarinet Quintet in the pivoting between formal clarity and expressive fantasy of the clarinet quintet *The Five Points*; and Clara Schumann's Piano Trio in the trio for alto saxophone, cello and piano *Pandora's Promise* – its disjunctive ideas imbued with an oblique resolution. Solo accordion gets caught up in a risqué scenario in *Push and Pull*, while *Puzzle* has bass clarinet integrating diverse rhythmic shards over a subtle electronic backdrop. Committed readings from such artists as the excellent Galatea Quartet, and a



Helmut Lachenmann is among the composers featured in Neos's new releases

pleasurable discovery.









Not least because the focus here is on solo piano, the output of Marcus **Antonius Wesselmann** (b1965) is a tougher proposition – its prodigious technical range and often relentless if rarely literal rhythmic profile resulting in avowedly maximalist music. Hence the confrontational overlay of metres in *SOLO 5* (1999) or teasingly inexact formal repetitions in *SOLO 6* (2000). The 'moto blues' of *SOLO 7* (2001) leavens this austerity with a syncopated vitality redolent of Kapustin, while the 11 'combinatorial etudes' that comprise *SOLO 9* (2003) recall Ligeti in their conjuring up of intricate textures out of harmonically simple cells. Moritz Eggert, a notable composer in his own right, renders some transcendental pianism with unsparing conviction.

Previous releases suggested **Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf** (b1962) as among the leading German composers of his generation, but *Humanized Void* (2007) fails in its intention of representing the collapse of bourgeois musical culture in the Second World War – specifically the Holocaust. At over half an hour, this piece fails to sustain any longer-term impact as it lurches between portentous gestures which lack memorability. Just 10 minutes long, *Void* –

kol ischa asirit (2012) is far more successful in outlining a vision of human degradation by juxtaposing remorseless repetition with an unyielding harmonic backdrop. As directed by Roland Kluttig and Rupert Huber, the performances lack nothing in conviction, while the tape piece *Void – mal d'archive* (2003) evokes the spatial properties of Berlin's Jewish Museum in unnerving terms.

Time was when **Thomas Kessler** (b1937) composed impeccably avant-garde works, which makes such a piece as *said the shotgun to the head* (2003) the more arresting. Saul Williams is notably erudite among 'slam' poets – his sprawling text akin to Allen Ginsberg in existential fervour yet eschewing the latter's tendency to self-pity. Set in the context of a rap choir and orchestra dominated by strings and percussion, the music yields a subtlety that complements the panache of its main performer. If *Utopia II* (2011) is rather less provocative, the combining of voices and instruments with live electronics results in a sonic mesh that intriguingly sets in relief its 'utopian' texts. In both works, Jonathan Stockhammer directs the Cologne Radio Symphony with unfailing assurance – making this disc an unexpected highlight of the present selection. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

	Lachenmann ...zwei Gefühle..., etc Bavarian RSO / Eötvös, Mälkki NEOS 11424
	Lachenmann Ausklang Aimard; Bavarian RSO / Nott NEOS 11423
	BA Zimmermann Solo Piano Works Skouras NEOS 11026
	Wuorinen Chamber Works A & A Skouras NEOS 11123
	Schlumpf The Five Points, etc Galatea Qt et al NEOS 11519
	Wesselmann Piano Works Eggert NEOS 11508
	Mahnkopf Humanized Void, etc Kluttig, Huber NEOS 11417
	Kessler said the shotgun to the head Cologne RSO / Stockhammer NEOS 11511

excitement. A fine clarinet solo in the dusky coda, too, if not quite as raptly poetic as some rivals (the Boston SO/ Davis, Swedish RSO/Mikko Franck and Neeme Järvi's Gothenburg SO remake, to name but three).

As for the Seventh, captured live some four and a half years earlier than the rest, I appreciate its thoughtful sensitivity, seamlessly judged transitions and abundance of scrupulously observant detail. On the downside, though, those hard-working Hallé violins are a tad lacking in tonal clout, especially in and around the symphony's refulgent apex (try from fig Y, 19'05"), and the performance as a whole oddly fails to ignite, falling some way short of the craggy strength, elemental force and electrical charge so evident in front-runners such as Koussevitzky, Bernstein (Sony), Maazel (Decca), Mravinsky, Davis (in Boston and live in London), Berglund (in Helsinki), Vänskä and Segerstam (Ondine). Still, this CD is worth hearing for the Fifth alone, and anyone following Elder's Sibelius cycle will need no further incentive to purchase. **Andrew Achenbach**

Tchaikovsky

Serenade for Strings, Op 48.
Souvenir de Florence, Op 70
The Russian Virtuosi of Europe / Yuri Zhislin
Orchid 11424 (65' • DDD)

Tchaikovsky

Méditation, Op 42 No 1^a. Sérénade mélancolique, Op 26^a. Souvenir de Florence, Op 70^b. Variations on a Rococo Theme, Op 33^a

Jan Vogler vc
^bMoritzburg Festival Ensemble; ^aFrankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra / Andrés Orozco-Estrada
Sony Classical 11429-2 (73' • DDD)



Tchaikovsky adored the city of Florence, returning there throughout his lifetime, paying tribute in his sextet *Souvenir de Florence*. He paid homage to his other great love – Mozart – in the beautiful, jewel-like Serenade for Strings. 'I am violently in love with this work and cannot wait for it to be played,' he wrote to Nadezhda von Meck. They're frequent partners on disc, with *Souvenir* in a string-orchestra arrangement over which I harbour doubts. The Russian Virtuosi of Europe, a young ensemble formed in 2004, present these two gems on their

debut disc. Meanwhile, cellist Jan Vogler teams up with colleagues – the Moritzburg Festival Ensemble – to present the *Souvenir* in sextet form, a lively partner to Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations*.

I much prefer the sextet version of *Souvenir*, where the abrasiveness of one-to-a-part gives the work more vigour than the bright sheen of multiple strings. Vogler and friends deliver an exciting account, heightened by lean, wiry strings. The ebullient *Allegro con spirito* launches with gusto, while the *Adagio cantabile* sings. Vogler's ensemble perform with great panache – not quite with the authority of the Borodin Quartet (Elatus, 1/94) – but a tremendously enjoyable performance.

Some chamber orchestra versions sound like a glossy Ferrari roaring down the autostrada. The RVE offer something of a 'halfway house' – just 18 strings, which means the excessively souped-up sound of a full symphony orchestra's string section is avoided. This is a pleasant performance, the gentle pizzicato accompaniment to the *Adagio cantabile* a feather bed for a lovely violin solo (presumably ensemble director Yuri Zhislin). They catch the bustling central section of the third movement well.

Tchaikovsky's Serenade is a joyous work, but wistful too, especially if you know Balanchine's ballet. One immediately notices the RVE's firm, resonant sound, in a brisk, businesslike performance, cleanly articulated. The Waltz trips along delicately, not smothered in French polish, and it's good to hear the Elégie truly start *pianissimo*; it flows a little too swiftly though – there's pathos in this music. They don't always match the panache of the Vienna Chamber Orchestra but this is a promising debut disc.

Vogler's Sony disc centres on a spruce account of the *Rococo Variations*, where he combines Wilhelm Fitzenhagen's version with the original, introducing the final variation (cut by Fitzenhagen) as Var 3b. His playing is agile and graceful, but the Frankfurt Radio Symphony are a little more earthbound than ideal. *Concertante* works pinched from the violin repertoire complete the programme.

Mark Pullinger

Selected comparisons – coupled as above:

Vienna CO, Entremont (10/91) (NAXO) 8 550404

Concertgebouw CO, Boni (PENT) PTC5186 009

Souvenir de Florence – selected comparison:

Borodin Qt, Yurov, Milman (1/94) (ELAT) 2564 61774-2

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Mozart's Serenade in B flat, K361

Trevor Pinnock talks to **Philip Clark** about the ambitious wind serenade, the 'Gran Partita'

Trevor Pinnock arrives at the appointed hour in a café on Marylebone Lane ready to discuss his new recording on Linn of Mozart's Serenade No 10 in B flat, the *Gran Partita*, K361 – with the Royal Academy of Music Soloists Ensemble – clutching two scores: a photocopy of Mozart's autograph score alongside his well-thumbed modern edition. I've brought along the 2005 Urtext edition, which means that, between us, we've unwittingly upgraded this section of the magazine to 'Musician and the Scores'.

It's nearly a year since Pinnock finished his recording, but the fantasy world of Mozart's most ambitious, longest and most technically complex wind serenade is still alive and kicking inside his brain – 'It thrills me just to look at that on the page!' he beams at one point. But before digging inside the notes, Pinnock wants to make something clear. Although Mozart's composition does indeed slot into the 18th-century tradition of *Harmoniemusik* – music for wind ensemble often performed in the homes of those well-heeled enough to commission it – the *Gran Partita* is more than just entertainment. 'There are elements of this music that run much deeper,' he asserts.

Much about the *Gran Partita* – the precise date of its composition, and how Mozart intended the ordering of movements to function – remains shadowy, but beyond doubt is that Mozart wilfully exploded polite conventions surrounding *Harmoniemusik*, delivering seven substantial movements conceived for a vastly enlarged ensemble. 'The dating is uncertain,' Pinnock says, 'but we know it was written after *Idomeneo*, which itself is a real high point in the way Mozart deals with the *Harmonie*. And here he gives us an expanded ensemble – not only two oboes, but pairs of clarinets and basset-horns with four French horns instead of the usual two. The combination of basset-horns with the horns makes a tremendously rich and dense sound, immediately apparent from the sonority of the opening chord. Having the four horns, in F and in B flat, hands Mozart a nice variety of notes, while the basset-horns put a lot of pudding in the middle.'

Given Mozart's structural largesse – his sonata-form first movement occupies symphonic dimensions and leads to two slow movements interspersed between two minuets, climaxing in an elaborate set of variations and a tub-thumping finale – I wondered what Mozart did to unify his structure. Are there melodic and harmonic threads embedded inside the first movement that are developed subsequently? 'I think that



In his *Gran Partita* recording, Pinnock aimed to 'point to the remarkable moments'

might be going too far,' Pinnock responds, 'but certainly Mozart strikes a fine balance between the sequence of dances and his reflective movements. It is questionable, though, how much he thought of it as a unified whole, and we need to be careful about imposing our later preconceptions on to earlier times.' Perhaps Mozart viewed it as a proto-jukebox, a selection of tracks to be picked over as required? 'I'm not saying it's not that – but the truth is we simply don't know. But it must not sound like a sequence of bits if we choose to perform it as a whole. The balance of speeds and atmosphere, and how one piece moves into the next, becomes of prime importance.'

'My modern edition is scrupulous and well done,' Pinnock explains as I ask what consulting an autograph score contributes to piecing together an interpretation, 'but autograph scores always do give me little ideas. For instance, at the beginning of the first Minuet, Mozart, in the first oboe part in the autograph, begins the slur on the first minim and it reaches right through into the next bar, while in the other instruments the slur starts only on the third-beat semiquavers. Perhaps we could say he's made a mistake; after all, he writes very fast, and it's true the slur doesn't appear the next time around. But actually we have a clue about the sort of length



The historical view

Johann Friedrich Schink
Litterarische Fragmente, 1785, in response to
a partial performance of the *Gran Partita*

'I heard music for wind instruments today by Herr Mozart, in four movements, glorious and sublime. It consisted of 13 instruments. Oh what an effect it made – glorious and grand, excellent and sublime.'

Peter Shaffer
Salieri in the play Amadeus (1979)

'On the page it looked nothing...Just a pulse – bassoons and basset-horns – like a rusty squeezebox. Then suddenly – high above it – an oboe, a single note, hanging there unwavering, till a clarinet took over and sweetened it into a phrase of such delight!'

Pierre Boulez
Interview, Gramophone, December 2008

'The big *Adagio* is...a moment of genius. You have this introduction that is very slow with just a chord, an arpeggio...But it's so wonderful, so mysterious that it has you thinking "What will happen?" It's a magical, ceremonial moment – like a ritual.'

Mozart expected his first note to be played. It was customary during this era to shorten longer notes, but that he slurs the leading part tells me that the oboist is going to play a long note at the beginning.'

He points to a comparable example in the Romance where, in bar 20, editorial slurs differ from Mozart's hand, and when we flip back to the work's beginning, an intriguing line of enquiry opens up around how to articulate Mozart's opening rhythm: crotchet, dotted quaver/semiquaver, crotchet. 'Some people do really quite sharp double-dotting here,' Pinnock explains, 'but personally I don't like the sound. Later [in bar 12] he writes very precise double-dots and, again, we have to decide what that implies – but playing dotted notes with machine precision is likely to lead to rhythmic stiffness.'

But, I probe, why might some performers choose to double-dot the opening semiquaver when Mozart, only a few bars later, notates actual double-dots? 'There are all sorts of arguments,' Pinnock suggests, 'and if you were trying to justify double-dotting in the first bar you might say Mozart wrote it differently in bar 12 simply as a notational device: he wants the oboe to play with the basset-horns and that was the clearest way to write it. You could argue that if you wanted to – but I don't want to. I considered double-dotting the opening, of course, but the music told me otherwise.'

'I phone Mozart, by which I mean I use my musical conscience. I feel he'd be delighted with the sound' – Trevor Pinnock

Pinnock describes the process of bonding with composers via making imaginary phone calls, and pressing questions surrounding Mozart's bass-line made him reach for speed dial. 'The bass-line was played originally on string bass,' he explains, 'because period contrabassoons could not have given him sufficient flexibility. But if we're agreed that playing this music on modern instruments is justifiable, then the question of what instruments becomes one of informed musical decision. When I heard the marvellous playing of the bassoonist [Alice Quayle] producing almost a bowed effect, I knew that using a contrabassoon was right. And so I phone Mozart – by which really I mean I use my musical conscience – and I feel he'd be delighted with the sound we have on the record.'

We close by discussing Mozart's intricate chain of variations, and how to integrate so many characterful individual moving parts into a convincing whole. 'I like that, in your edition,' Pinnock enthuses, 'the editor has left out the suggested *Andante* in my score; there's a particular elegance to this theme and why impinge upon that with a generalised tempo mark? With a theme and variations you need to be aware of your starting point and, on the journey, follow your fantasy. You see how wonderfully Mozart has used the characters of different instruments throughout the variations? That miraculous moment in Var 5 when he has basset-horns and clarinets play in rapid demi-semiquavers surprises us, even now, and trying to imagine how people might have been amazed in the period by, say, Mozart's modulations or orchestration is crucial. Our ears have been spoilt by too much music – but as musicians we need to point to such remarkable moments and express, though not in an artificial way, that they are very special and that you need to listen.'

► To read our review of Pinnock's Gran Partita recording, turn to page 52



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Chamber



Lindsay Kemp welcomes a lively collection of music by Pachelbel: *'Gli Incogniti are as able to inhabit serious melancholy as to access a sense of fun for the dances'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 52**



Philip Clark listens to a mixed recital of sonatas for saxophone: *'Denisov realises that merely referencing jazz beat and stylistic fingerprints will register as second-hand'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 54**

Adams • JS Bach • Messiaen

'Visions'

Adams Hallelujah Junction **JS Bach** Cantata No 106 – Sonatina **Messiaen** Visions de l'Amen **Christina and Michelle Naughton** *pfs*
Warner Classics © 2564 60113-6 (62' • DDD)



Four years after their impressive debut release on Orfeo, the twin-sister piano duo

Christina and Michelle Naughton begin a relationship with Warner Classics on an audacious note, or, more accurately, in a veritable avalanche of notes via Messiaen's *Visions de l'Amen*. After all, this is a challenging work packed with textural thickets and deceptively tricky rhythms, yet few duos can resist its potential for sonorous splendour and wide ranging tone-colour.

Just about everything comes together in this recording. The Naughton twins don't take the opening movement's *très lent* directive at face value (the composer and his wife Yvonne Loriod were similarly speedy!), but they pull you in with their assiduously gradual, painstakingly incremental dynamic build-up. No 2's declamatory octaves and pedal-enveloped chords line up in ideal foreground/background perspective, although the second piano's long opening solo doesn't distinguish the articulations to the degree heard in the Osborne-Roscoe, Oppens-Lowenthal and Serkin-Takahashi recordings.

However, No 3's accented antiphonal chords are seamlessly synchronised. No 4's slow sections have an attractive lilting quality that helps propel the music forwards, while a graceful, slightly understated rendition of the long second piano solo downplays the music's tawdry, sickly sweet underbelly (I usually can't hear this without wincing). The duo also make No 7's ecstatic bells and whistles less heavy and pompous than usual, simply by playing the music fast and lightly.

György Kurtág's four-hand arrangement of Bach's *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit*

follows as a welcome palate cleanser, but why isn't Kurtág credited in the booklet-notes or content listings? Lastly, John Adams's *Hallelujah Junction* features nicely pointed canonic interplay and discreet pedalling, qualities that bring out the music's inherently balletic nature. Clear and carefully balanced engineering further seals an enthusiastic recommendation. **Jed Distler**

Messiaen – selected comparisons:

Serkin, Takahashi (11/74⁸) (RCA) 09026 68907-2

Messiaen, Loriod (6/92⁸) (ACCO) 465 791-2

Osborne, Roscoe (2/05) (HYPE) CDA67366

Oppens, Lowenthal (CEDI) CDR90000 119

Bruch

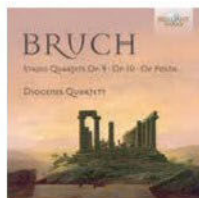
'Complete String Quartets'

String Quartets – No 1, Op 9; No 2, Op 10; Op *posth*
Diogenes Quartet
Brilliant © 95051 (80' • DDD)

Bruch

String Quartet No 1, Op 9^a. Swedish Dances, Op 63^b. Piano Quintet^c

^bDene Olding *vn* ^{bc}Piers Lane *pf* ^{ac}Goldner Quartet
Hyperion © CDA68120 (78' • DDD)



When Max Bruch's music was compared unfavourably to Brahms's, he had his excuse ready: the pram in the hall. 'I had a wife and children to support,' he said, according to Christopher Fifield's biography. 'I had to write works that were pleasing and easily understood.' That's certainly the case with his chamber music. Written for the most part at the beginning and end of his career, there's less of it than you might expect. These two new recordings, between them, cover nearly half of his chamber output.

The Diogenes Quartet's disc, in fact, has a claim to be the first complete cycle of his string quartets, including the premiere recording of his unpublished Quartet in C minor – written in 1852 when the composer was 14, praised by Spohr, but

published only in 2013. In fact, it shares its two inner movements almost note-for-note with Bruch's 'official' First Quartet, Op 9. And like that work and the lush E major Quartet, Op 10, of 1858, it's very audibly written under the spell not of Brahms (how could it be, in the 1850s?) or even Schumann, but Mendelssohn.

Nothing wrong with that, of course, especially when it's done with as much freshness and warmth as the teenage Bruch brings to all three of these works. The Diogenes Quartet play with ardour and a symphonic sweep, with first violinist Stefan Kirpal's brilliant tone giving a high polish to Bruch's swirling passagework. Brilliant Classics' expansive, resonant recording helps with that too. In Op 9 – the one work common to both these discs – it's an interesting contrast to the Goldner Quartet's account. The Hyperion engineers have gone for a less glossy, more intimate sound. You can feel the bite of rosin and horsehair.

That goes for the performance as well, with the Goldners handling Bruch slightly less reverently. Listen to the third movement: where the Diogenes Quartet lilt and swing, the Goldners forge a rugged musical argument. Take your pick – personally, I feel that a gentle bruising helps Bruch's ideas release their flavour. And violinist Dene Olding and pianist Piers Lane certainly bring a delightful sense of theatre to Bruch's *Swedish Dances*: tuneful attempts to cash in on Dvořák's and Brahms's success which, like so much in Bruch's career, didn't quite live up to his hopes.

Lane also joins the Goldner Quartet in the G minor Piano Quintet, conceived for musical friends during Bruch's stint as music director of the Liverpool Philharmonic. It's winningly done. Lane's long partnership with the Goldners pays off in the call-and-response of the melancholy chorale theme with which the Quintet opens, and the balance he achieves between Bruch's often brilliant (but never flashy) piano-writing and the strings' lyricism.

Both discs are elegantly presented, and in the quartets, both easily outclass the Academica Quartet on Dynamic. Collectors



The Ebène Quartet are joined by Gautier Capuçon in an outstanding new recording of Schubert's String Quintet on Warner Classics (review on page 52)

will want the Diogenes Quartet for the premiere recording; those looking for a single general introduction to Bruch's chamber music might prefer the Hyperion disc. But both serve the composer splendidly, with a musicianship and a devotion that might have had even this famously grumpy composer cracking a reluctant smile. **Richard Bratby**

String Quartets Nos 1 & 2 – selected comparison:
Academica Qt (5/94) (DYNA) CDS29

Clarke

Viola Sonata. Chinese Puzzle. Dumka^a. I'll Bid My Heart Be Still (Old Scottish Border Melody). Lullaby. Lullaby on an Ancient Irish Tune. Morpheus. Passacaglia on an Old English Tune. Untitled Piece

Duo Rùnya (Diana Bonatesta *va* Arianna Bonatesta *pn*) with ^a**Gabriele Campagna** *vn*
Aevea © AE16008 (68' • DDD)



Who was Rebecca Clarke? You'd be forgiven for asking. Today she's largely

forgotten. In her own opinion her only 'one whiff of success' was her Viola Sonata, which in 1919 won her joint first prize

(with Ernest Bloch) at the International Chamber Music Competition. Yet she did so much more than that: she was the first female student of Charles Villiers Stanford to specialise only in composition; the author of about a hundred songs, choral pieces and chamber works, most of them still unpublished; an outstanding viola player; and one of the first women to be accepted into a professional orchestra.

Hers is an alluring compositional voice that works on many levels. There's the dreaming, whimsical side, the uncompromising grasp of structure, the impressionistic fascination with image. Then there's a quality that often pulls us up short: namely a fearless intensity. What she lacks is a strong sense of individuality; at points you wish the real Clarke would step forward, so closely does her musical language mirror Bridge's, Ravel's, Debussy's.

Nonetheless, this portrait of her chamber works from Duo Rùnya is a welcome novelty. From the impetuous opening of the Viola Sonata, the Italian sisters Diana and Arianna Bonatesta never shy away from extremes – but nor do they underestimate the work's subtlety. They relish the dreamy lyricism in the first movement, the delicacy of the elfish Scherzo. Most of all they relish

the sense of journey, the tautness of Clarke's musical argument. Just occasionally, it's too much of a scramble: Diana's viola-playing lacks the effortlessness of, say, Tabea Zimmermann's or the gloss factor of Philip Dukes's. Where she triumphs over Dukes, though, is in her imaginative range.

It's a quality that pays off in the gem-like shorter pieces, where she manages to crystallise every character: the dreaminess of the *Lullaby* and the exoticism of the *Chinese Puzzle*, underlined by her sister's translucent touch. Throughout, both performers are amazingly light on their feet, but I sense that they're most at home in music of greater scope and depth. *Morpheus*, inspired by the Greek god of dreams, is strikingly Debussian, while *Dumka* draws on the Slavic tradition, exploited, most famously, by Dvořák. On the surface, then, quite different, but both are intensely elegiac – a fitting closing statement from a composer who felt compelled to bill some of her work under a man's name, and found that it indeed sold better than under her own. **Hannah Nepil**

Viola Sonata – selected comparison:

Zimmermann, Gerstein (11/10) (MYRI) MYR004

Works for Viola and Piano – selected comparison:

Dukes, Rabman (NAXO) 8 557934

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

PERCUSSIVE BACH

William Yeoman samples a selection of discs exploring Bach on marimba and vibraphone, jazz piano and harpsichord



Stanislao Marco Spina reworks Bach and Mozart for the marimba

The music of JS Bach continues to prove as durable and adaptable as ever, as evidenced by four recent releases for (mostly) percussion instruments: two featuring the marimba, one the vibraphone and one a piano/harpsichord duo. Interestingly, the relatively dry sound and lack of sustain of the marimba tends to underscore the more austere elements in Bach's music, while the vibraphone's brighter sound and greater sustain nevertheless evoke a more abstract, meditative quality. In perhaps the most intriguing recording here, the piano and harpsichord combine all these qualities and more, while departing substantially from the Bachian source material through the agency of original composition and extended improvisations.

The young Italian marimba player **Stanislao Marco Spina** began exploring the possibilities of Bach's music on his instrument around five years ago and admits his 'desire can only grow, to continue along this path on which I have just started'. Listening to these first fruits of his explorations, one can only rejoice in such an admission. The programme has been intelligently curated, with the C major Prelude from Book 1 of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, the Fugue from the G minor Solo Violin Sonata, the Aria and first variation from the *Goldberg Variations* and the *Andante* from *Italian Concerto* prefacing a complete performance of the D minor

Solo Violin Partita. Mozart's *Fantasia* in D minor, K397, can be considered an encore. In each case – and this can be heard most clearly in the D minor Chaconne – Spina's unhurried delineation of structure and phrasing is heightened by a peculiar sensitivity to dynamic shading, purposeful suggestion and the silence enveloping each tone.

For his debut recital recording, vibes player **Ja Hsieh** in some respects goes one further than Spina by giving us the Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas complete. As he writes in his booklet-note, 'four-mallet technique and the pedal of the vibes allow me to reinterpret Bach's contrapuntal and polyphonic writing style' while feeling he was 'exploring the roots of Baroque music, arts and architecture through this legendary repertoire'. His confidence is well-founded, with the fugal movements especially benefiting from tones being given their full value while still retaining something of the pealing of bells. In quicker movements such as the *Corrente* from Partita No 2 or the *Presto* from the G minor Sonata, Hsieh indulges in an almost imperceptible 'swing' which, combined with some superbly dramatised crescendos, results in a forwards momentum that is more evoked than forcefully realised.

With three differently sized marimbas at their disposal, French marimba ensemble **Trio SR9** are immediately guaranteed access to a wider range of Bach repertoire. Again,

this is another intelligently programmed recital, with 'the Canon of the *Musical Offering* the guiding and hypnotic thread that introduces the programme' before reappearing at various intervals and at the end. But 'hypnotic' is probably the keyword here. There are complete accounts of the Trio Sonatas Nos 2 and 4 and excerpts from the Cello Suites, the Violin Sonatas and Partitas and the French and English suites, all tastefully realised. What draws one in, however, is the rich, deep timbres of the instruments and the trio's expansive phrasing, by turns haunting and bittersweet in their effects.

Perhaps it's fair to say French pianist/composer **Edouard Ferlet** is far from 'only' a jazz musician, such is his predilection for experimenting in a wide range of styles and immersing himself in creative collaborations with authors, actors, film-makers and classical musicians such as harpsichordist **Violaine Cochard**. 'Bach Plucked/Unplucked' is the result of a first meeting between these two performers on a French radio show focusing on Baroque music and improvisation. Most of the composed music is Ferlet's; more than half is improvised. As Ferlet writes: 'Bach is perhaps less the figure of this disc; we detach ourselves a bit from him.' And yet Bach is the presiding spirit, ever present even when his music's not. Boasting titles such as *Je me souviens* (after Bach's *Gigue* from Partita No 1, BWV825) and *Entre écorce* (after the D minor Sonata, BWV964), the pieces move from frenetic, minimalist-like repetition through sweeping cascades of arpeggios and spiky intervallic dances to sweet Bill Evans-like meditations with a true Baroque sensibility and ear for quirky timbral combinations. It's all utterly mesmerising and as brilliant as it is imaginative. And it reminds us that the music of Bach is indeed an ever-flowing stream from which generations of musicians continue to drink and find musical sustenance. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



JS Bach, Mozart 'Baroque Marimba'
Stanislao Marco Spina
Stone Records © 5060192 780574



JS Bach 'Bach on Vibraphone'
Ja Hsieh
Ja Hsieh © ② no catalogue number



JS Bach 'Bach on the Marimba'
Trio SR9
Naive © V5426



JS Bach, Ferlet 'Bach Plucked/
Unplucked' **Edouard Ferlet, Violaine
Cochard** Alpha © ALPHA229

Dvořák · Janáček · Suk

Dvořák String Quartet No 13, Op 106 B192

Janáček String Quartet No 1, 'The Kreutzer

Sonata' **Suk** Meditation on the Old Czech

Chorale 'St Wenceslas', Op 35

Wihan Quartet

Nimbus Alliance © NI6322 (65' • DDD)



Right from the off in Dvořák's late G major Quartet you can tell that the Wihan

Quartet are taking an inflected route. They draw a *crescendo* over the demi-semiquaver figure for the violins more vividly than do the Pavel Haas Quartet on their Supraphon recording – although the PHQ achieve rather more in the way of drama and are also marginally more limpid in the second subject. Both quartets achieve a glowing canvas for the wonderful *Adagio* but, come the scherzo, the Wihan set off at a noticeably slower tempo. Nor do they push the pace in the finale as much as the PHQ, whose version is as fresh as any we've had in years. But the Wihan play sensitively and their fill-ups are especially imaginative.

Josef Suk's *Meditation on the Old Czech Chorale 'St Wenceslas'* is a masterly example of contrapuntal quartet-writing, and in addition to infusing individual lines with expressive weight the Wihan manage to keep textures admirably clear. Janáček's First Quartet is also well observed, especially near the beginning of the work where cello, first violin and second violin respectively tail two bars' worth of *Adagio* with a fidgety *Con moto*, each time growing more animated (a successively faster metronome is indicated). The second movement is teasingly playful, with icy *sul ponticellos*, the opening of the fourth movement persuasively lyrical. The Wihan make a persuasively narrative statement of a work that can too often sound disjointed, and they are well served by their recording.

As to a coupling for the Dvořák, the Pavel Haas wheel out the *American* Quartet – a very good performance but rather surplus to requirements in a crowded field – whereas the Wihan at least provide an imaginative programme context for all three works. I'd recommend them unless you're hell-bent on having the two main items coupled with Dvořák and Janáček respectively, in which case there are plenty of excellent options available, not least the Pražák, Lindsay and Panocha Quartets (Dvořák) and the Hagen, Jerusalem, Takács and Talich Quartets (Janáček). **Rob Cowan**

Dvořák – selected comparisons:

Pavel Haas Qt (12/10) (SUPR) SU4038-2

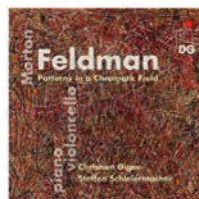
Feldman

Patterns in a Chromatic Field

Christian Giger vs **Steffen Schleiermacher** *pf*

Dabringhaus und Grimm © MDG613 1931-2

(76' • DDD)



When, in 2004, John Zorn's Tzadik label declared its new recording of Morton

Feldman's 1981 cello-and-piano work *Patterns in a Chromatic Field* to be 'definitive', Rohan de Saram and Marianne Schroeder's pioneering HatArt version was no longer available, allowing Charles Curtis (cello) and Aleck Karis (piano) free rein. Since then, Deirdre Cooper and John Tilbury have released their live performance from the 2006 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival on Eddie Prévost's Matchless label, while in 2008 Arne Deforce and Yutaka Oya's version appeared on the French Aeon label. And so Christian Giger and Steffen Schleiermacher's new disc grazes in a more generously populated chromatic field.

Oddball marketing on the MDG website asserting that this work demonstrates 'the minimalist master's more entertaining side' notwithstanding (he was no minimalist and had precisely zero interest in light entertainment), *Patterns in a Chromatic Field* scratches all Feldman's familiar stylistic itches while allowing the timbral specifics of the instrumental pairing to suggest a carefully circumscribed soundscape. 'It's very related to serialism, but also...to medieval disciplines of the Kabbala,' he wrote, but even by Feldman's standards this music is curiously inscrutable – like we're listening to a futuristic mash-up of ancient Shamanistic rituals operated by some secretive, long-lost rulebook.

Tzadik's self-declared definitive status might be maddeningly presumptuous, but the label has a point. Feldman begins his piece with the cello suspended in its high register unwinding a slurred cascade of pitches that bends pitch and temperament, these tumbling sounds cemented in place by stabbing piano block chords. Curtis and Karis, on Tzadik, hang to each other like limpets and generate a combined sound best described as laminal, a whole generated from the flow of multiple layers. Giger and Schleiermacher are more detached entities, their aloofness not helped by the chilly and distant acoustic.

Still, Giger and Schleiermacher do retain a sense of rhythmic insistence noticeably lacking in the languid Defore/Oya version, and they do more than deliver a convincing

performance. Schleiermacher refuses to underplay Feldman's uncharacteristically scabrous rhythms, while Karis faithfully articulates the composer's wide spectrum of dynamics and, around the 56-minute mark, makes a sequence of scrapped glissandos veritably holler. But as an overall structure, consisting of moving parts that fold and discreetly interlock, Curtis and Karis remain invincible. Giger and Schleiermacher hand us patterns and a chromatic field; for Curtis and Karis, 'in a' is important too. **Philip Clark**

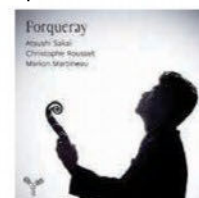
Forqueras

Pièces de viole

Atsushi Sakai, Marion Martineau *viols*

Christophe Rousset *hpd*

Aparté © ③ AP122 (3h 19' • DDD)



With the exception of some of the big *pièces de caractère* of Marin Marais, the five suites

for bass viol by the Forquerays, father and son, are much the most technically demanding – and no less musically rewarding – in the repertoire. Wieland Kuijken was the first to record a Forqueras suite, No 5, in 1970 (Harmonia Mundi – nla).

Nearly a half century on, only a handful of players have recorded complete sets. John Hsu (Musical Heritage Society – nla) was the first, in 1972, marking Antoine Forqueras's tercentary, but it wasn't until 1995 that a second complete set appeared: Paolo Pandolfo's polished and wide-ranging performances set the gold standard. A third, superbly executed set from Lorenz Duftschmid (a Savall pupil) appeared in 2006, making Atsushi Sakai's 2015 only the fourth.

Sakai's performances are distinguished by the freshness and sincerity of his interpretations. He is an eloquent exponent, never pretentious or superficial, never afraid to play slowly. He produces a consistently lovely tone, and his sense of Forqueraian phrasing and attention to detail are impressive. He is both fortunate and honoured to be partnered by Christophe Rousset, whose stylish yet transparent and evocative realisations are peerless, and Marion Martineau, who perfectly blends her instrument's tone-colour to Sakai's.

In each of the five suites, at least two pieces stand out from other recorded versions. In the First Suite they are his melancholic interpretation of 'La Cottin' and the wistful, feminine portrait of 'La Portugaise'. In the Second they can be found in the prelude, expressive qualities of

his 'La Bouron' and the courtly slo-mo of 'La Dubreuil', qualities further explored in the Third Suite in 'La Régente', in which Sakai paints an affectionate musical portrait, and 'La Du Vaucel', which is sublimely atmospheric and carries the listener back in time. In the Fourth it is the keenly observed nobility of 'La Clément' and the stillness of the 'Sarabande La D'Aubonne' that cast a spell, and in the Fifth, the expressive high notes and leaps in the magisterial 'La Rameau', the wonderfully sustained, poised 'Sarabande La Léon' and the nostalgia – even a sense of the ethereal – he expresses in 'La Silva' that make this latest set essential listening: Forqueray as you've never heard him before. **Julie Anne Sadie**

Suites – selected comparisons:

Pandolfo, Balestracci, Lislevand, Egüez, Morini

(GLOS) GCD920401

Dufschmid, Boysen, Urbanetz, Hämmerle (PAN) PC10190

D Matthews

'Complete String Quartets, Vol 4'

D Matthews String Quartet No 11, Op 108.

Diabelli Variation Beethoven Eleven New Bagatelles, Op 119. Piano Sonatas – No 28, Op 101; No 11, Op 22 – Adagio con molta espressione (all transcr Matthews)

Kreutzer Quartet

Toccata Classics © TOCC0318 (74' • DDD)



Beethoven is the obvious and fully acknowledged godparent to David Matthews's string quartets, and it is to his influence that the fourth volume of the Kreutzer Quartet's recorded cycle is devoted.

The Op 119 Bagatelles go superbly for quartet, the various conversations in the part-writing gaining an extra witty point thanks to the changes of tone colour. Admittedly No 3 is more of a strain for the violins than it is on the piano, but the more trenchant passages (such as the coda to that piece and No 5) kick up a splendid racket. Matthews's editorial interventions always have musical point.

A far less likely candidate for transcription, on the face of it, is the A major Sonata. True, Beethoven himself made his own arrangement for quartet of his E major Piano Sonata, Op 14 No 1, but Matthews's presentation of Op 101 is more of a curate's egg. To my mind the finale comes off best. The first movement here becomes merely jaunty, losing the inwardness Beethoven asks for, while the third movement sounds reduced in stature by the superimposed dynamics (whether

from the transcription or the performance I know not). I confess to some bafflement regarding the third bar of the second movement, where the top voice loses Beethoven's motivic profile. Is this a faulty transcription or a deliberate change, or perhaps even an oddity of the performance or recording?

Unfortunately the boxy, close-up recorded sound does the players and the music no favours. And while the members of the Kreutzer Quartet continue to serve Matthews loyally, one could wish for more technical finish, while the comparatively narrow range of tone-colour tends to amplify minor imperfections in intonation (particularly worrying, I found, in the *Diabelli Variation* and the B flat Sonata slow movement), and undamped resonances from the cello's low open strings are a recurring distraction.

For me the variations on the Eighth Bagatelle from Op 119 that constitute Matthews's 25-minute Quartet No 11 are the most absorbing experience on this disc. Matthews starts by leading the ear by steps from the original into his own inventive world, then offers a mixture of the cussedly argumentative and the quixotically characteristic (as in the drunk-sounding *Tempo di mazurka*). At first encounters I'm not sure the penultimate Cavatina lives up to its apparent aspirations to profundity, but the final fugue certainly fires on all cylinders. **David Fanning**

Mozart

String Quartets – No 14, K387; No 17, 'Hunt', K458

Hagen Quartet

Myrios © MYR017 (59' • DDD/DSD)



The line between poetry and preciousness is a thin one, and I don't feel the Hagens reliably locate it here. After several hearings I still find the opening of K387 almost intolerable, with phrases artfully caressed and distended, and barely two successive bars played at the same tempo. In their complete DG set of the 'Haydn' Quartets (4/02) the Hagens struck a fine balance between flexibility and the forward motion predicated by Mozart's *Allegro vivace assai*. Some 15 years later their collective sonority is as elegantly honed as ever. No felicity of Mozart's part-writing escapes them. But with their tendency to cosset and ruminate, the crucial Mozartian *filo* – that thread of vital energy that should run through the movement – is lost.

If the first movement of K387 is an extreme case, the Hagens' *con amore* treatment of the 6/8 opening movement of the *Hunt* rather compromises the music's bounding, *alfresco* energy. Soft tends to mean slower. The new *cantabile* theme in the development unfolds as if in a dream – beautiful but enervating, and requiring a sudden spurt when a mischievous little semiquaver figure begins to permeate the texture. The *Hunt's* finale, too, for all its finesse and contrapuntal clarity, never quite 'spins'; and what Rob Cowan called 'the delicious, gypsy-style lilt' of the minuet in the earlier recording has now become faintly mannered, de-energised by tiny, cute-sounding hesitations. Against that, K387's ever-astonishing Menuetto – surely the longest, most expressively complex minuet in the entire Classical repertoire – is as riveting as before: fast (in response to the *Allegro* marking in Mozart's autograph), febrile and properly disquieting, with the bold dynamic contrasts underlining the blurring of the metre in the opening bars.

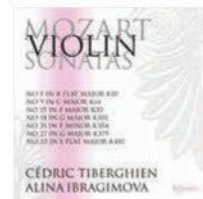
Both slow movements are deeply felt and lovingly phrased. If the tempo distensions and rhythmic nuances, again, occasionally sound self-regarding, I wouldn't have missed their haunting, veiled inwardness as the music darkens from C major to D flat at the centre of K387's *Andante*, or their fragile, disembodied threads of tone in the floating second theme of the *Hunt's Adagio*. The Hagens, 2015 vintage, are certainly incapable of routine. But in their earlier incarnation they distil comparable insights with less obvious artifice. **Richard Wigmore**

Mozart

Violin Sonatas – No 5, K10; No 14, K29; No 18, K301; No 21, K304; No 27, K379; No 30, K403; No 33, K481

Alina Ibragimova *vn* **Cédric Tiberghien** *pf*

Hyperion © CDA68091 (104' • DDD)



Call me a killjoy, but my pulse rate rarely quickens at the prospect of Mozart's pre-pubescent music. The three childhood works on these discs – essentially keyboard sonatas with discreet violin support – go through the rococo motions pleasantly enough. But amid the music's chatter and trickle, only the doleful *minore* episode in the minuet finale of K30 and the carillon effects in the corresponding movement of K14 (enchantingly realised here) offer anything faintly individual. Still, it would be hard to imagine more persuasive performances than we have here from the

Henry Du Mont

O Mysterium

Motets & Élévations

pour la Chapelle de Louis XIV

Ensemble Correspondances
Sébastien Daucé



HMC 902241

'La transparence et l'éclat'

For twenty years (from 1663 to 1683) Henry Du Mont directed the music of the Sun King's chapel. For the daily Mass heard there he built up a new musical repertory consisting of motets for full chorus and more intimate pieces for solo voices. The former aimed to transpose to the context of the 'ordinary' the format of the large-scale works conceived for extraordinary ceremonies. Sébastien Daucé presents an innovative approach to these 'grands motets' that at once links specific musical features with historical data and reveals all their beauties in every detail.

ever-rewarding Tiberghien-Ibragimova duo: delicate without feyness, rhythmically buoyant (Tiberghien is careful not to let the ubiquitous Alberti figuration slip into auto-ripple) and never seeking to gild the lily with an alien sophistication.

The players likewise bring the crucial Mozartian gift of simplicity and lightness of touch (Ibragimova's pure, sweet tone selectively warmed by vibrato) to the mature sonatas that frame each of the two discs. It was Mozart, with his genius for operatic-style dialogues, who first gave violin and keyboard equal billing in his accompanied sonatas; and as in their Beethoven sonata cycle (Wigmore Hall Live), Tiberghien and Ibragimova form a close, creative partnership, abetted by a perfect recorded balance (in most recordings I know the violin tends to dominate). 'Every phrase tingles,' I jotted down frivolously as I listened to the opening *Allegro* of the G major Sonata, K301, truly *con spirito*, as Mozart asks, and combining a subtle flexibility with an impish glee in the *buffo* repartee.

Tiberghien and Ibragimova take the opening *Allegro* of the E minor Sonata, K304, quite broadly, emphasising elegiac resignation over passionate agitation. But their concentrated intensity is compelling both here and in the withdrawn – yet never wilting – minuet. Especially memorable are Ibragimova's chaste thread of tone in the dreamlike E major Trio, and Tiberghien's questioning hesitancy when the plaintive Minuet theme returns, an octave lower, after the Trio.

In the G major Sonata, K379, rapidly composed for a Viennese concert mounted by Archbishop Colloredo just before Mozart jumped ship, Tiberghien and Ibragimova are aptly spacious in the rhapsodic introductory *Adagio* (how eloquently Tiberghien makes the keyboard sing here), and balance grace and fire in the tense G minor *Allegro*. In the variation finale their basic tempo sounds implausibly jaunty for Mozart's prescribed *Andantino cantabile*, though objections fade with Tiberghien's exquisite voicing of the contrapuntal strands in the first variation. I enjoyed the latest of the sonatas, K481, unreservedly, whether in the players' exuberant give-and-take in the outer movements or their rapt, *innig Adagio*, where Ibragimova sustains and shades her dulcet lines like a thoroughbred lyric soprano. Having begun this review in grudging mode, I'll end in the hope that these delightful, inventive performances presage a complete series of Mozart's mature violin sonatas, with or without a smattering of childhood works.

Richard Wigmore

Mozart · Haydn

Haydn Notturmo No 8, HobII/27

Mozart Serenade No 10, 'Gran Partita', K361

Royal Academy of Music Soloists Ensemble /

Trevor Pinnock

Linn ⑤ CKD516 (60' • DDD)



Trevor Pinnock knows a thing or two about Mozart and imparts to his

youthful charges from the Royal Academy of Music all his enthusiasm for the Salzburger's greatest (and certainly largest) serenade. There's no other way to attempt this music than with a sense of playfulness and, in the two slow movements, deep inwardness, and on the whole these soloists match Mozart's expectations and provide a compelling performance.

Pinnock takes the first movement's *Allegro molto* marking at face value and drives through it as speedily as I've heard. Perhaps this results in a lack of characterisation, and little chance for the music to breathe in the rests that are so much a part of the main theme's stop-start progress. All comes right in the following Menuetto, however, and one becomes aware of the control these players are able to achieve, and especially of the poetic oboe-playing of Thomas Blomfield. He is to the fore again in the work's most famous movement, the *Adagio* that made such an impression on Salieri, if Peter Shaffer's take on Mozart's life is to be believed. A full complement of repeats is taken and I noticed only a couple of slightly fluffed second oboe entries that might have prompted a retake.

Haydn's G major Notturmo, composed in the late 1780s for Ferdinand IV of Naples, introduces strings to the mix. Naturally a more compact piece than the Mozart, it is nevertheless a complete charmer. It's a three movement work in the urbane manner of Haydn's string quartets, scored in this version for flute, oboe, horns (who quite rightly don't hold back), violas and bass, and a pleasing rarity that rounds off a rather winning disc. **David Threasher**

Pachelbel

'Un orage d'avril'

Musikalishe Ergötzung, P370a-375. Canon and

Gigue, P37. Partie a 4, P450. Das Gewitter im

Aprilen, P75^a. Guter Walther unser Raths, P180^a.

Mein Leben, dessen Creutz für mich, P360^a.

O grosses Musenlied, P391^a. Ach! Wie nichtig?

Ach! Wie flüchtig?, P500^a

^aHans Jörg Mammel *ten*

Gli Incogniti / Amandine Beyer

Harmonia Mundi ⑤ HMC90 2238 (80' • DDD • T/t)



The title of this release and the glowering skyscape on its cover are pure

marketing – the piece from which the title comes is not about April weather at all – but I don't think anyone lured by it into buying a disc of 17th-century chamber music need feel aggrieved. We don't get enough reminders that Pachelbel was a real composer of quality chamber music, yet here is his complete *Musikalishe Ergötzung* of 1695, consisting of six 'Parthien' (or suites) for two violins and continuo. Add in a seventh, unpublished suite, six secular songs and the Canon and Gigue, and these are 'musical pleasures' indeed.

If April is a red herring, the presence elsewhere in the artwork of Brueghel is more apt, for Pachelbel's music has a strong sense of connection with the world. The songs deal feelingly with death, the perfidy of princes (that's the April showers one), 'Good Councillor Walther' and a nameless patron, while the suites, for all their restless counterpoint, never lose touch with their grounded choreographic roots. Fine music, then, but not rarefied.

In Gli Incogniti it finds itself in expert hands. There is depth and sweetness to their sound, clarity and busyness to their counterpoint, and buoyancy to their expression of rhythm and line. They are as able to inhabit serious melancholy (in Partie IV for instance) as to access a sense of fun for dances such as the Aria of the 'Partie a 4' (to which they add a rat-a-tat finger-on-wood accompaniment) or in the occasional playful burst of pizzicato. Likewise, in the unassumingly strophic songs, they can quickly summon a mood, most movingly when viola-comforted death is the subject; Hans Jörg Mammel's clear but plangent tenor helps, though I wish he had more ease of movement. The Canon is intelligently done, its slowly changing countenance subtly observed, and closing not in grandiose climax but gentle farewell. Less chiselled than London Baroque's muscly 1994 recording, and more in tune than that of Les Cyclopes (7/95), this release is well worth your time. **Lindsay Kemp**

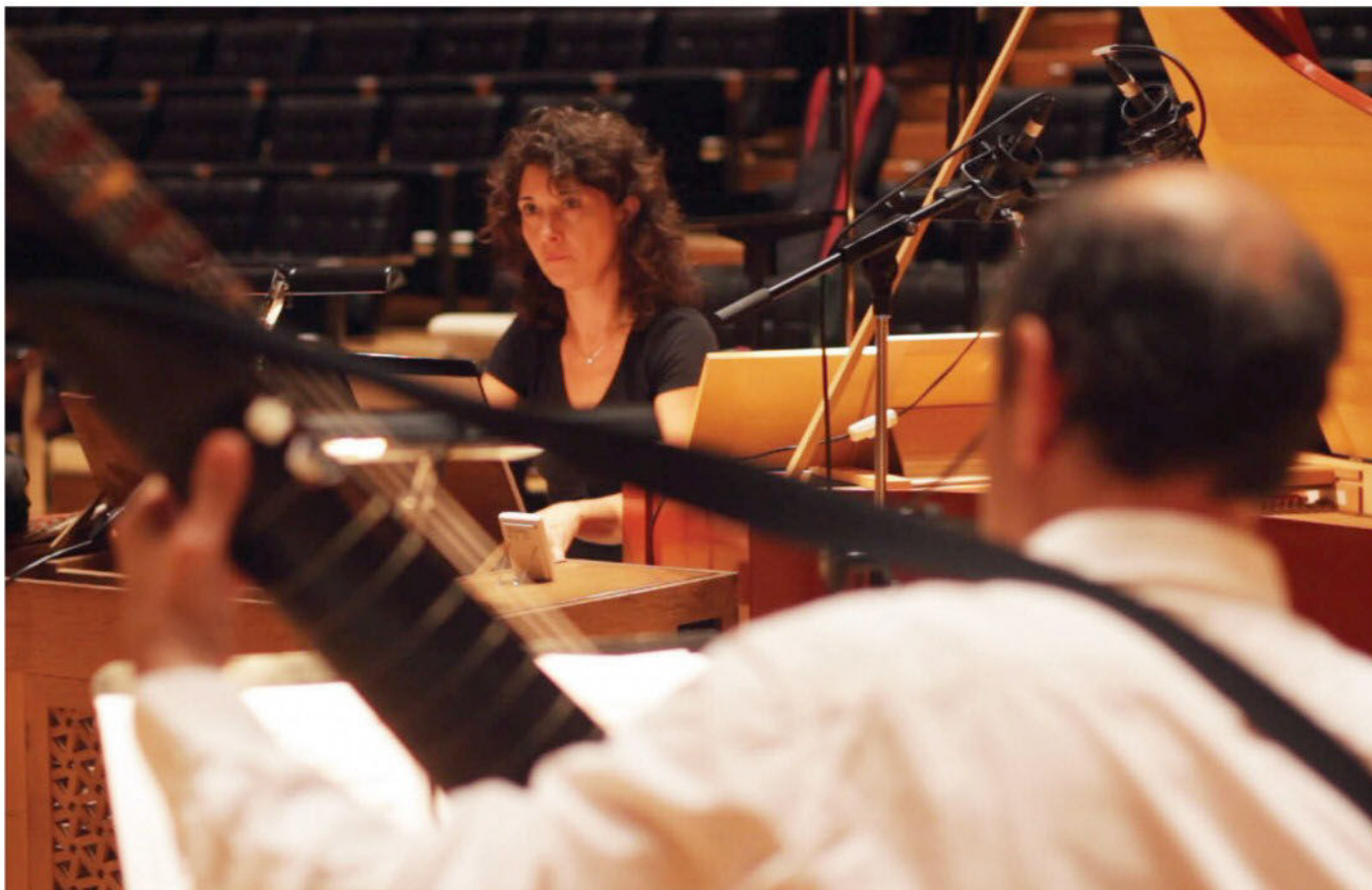
Schubert

String Quintet, D956^a. Atys, D585^b. Die Götter Griechenlands, D677^b. Der Jüngling und der Tod, D545^b. Der liebliche Stern, D861^b. Der Tod und das Mädchen, D531^b

Ebène Quartet with ^aGautier Capuçon vc ^bMatthias

Goerne bar ^bLaurène Durantel db

Erato ⑤ 2564 64876-1 (72' • DDD)



Amandine Beyer and Gli Incogniti offer a reminder that 'Pachelbel was a real composer of quality chamber music'



The Quintet is the peak of Schubert's chamber output and high on any ensemble's

wish-list. The essential recordings range from the Amadeus Quartet (with William Pleeth or Robert Cohen – DG) to the *Gramophone* Chamber Award-winning Pavel Haas Quartet (with Danjulo Ishizaka – Supraphon, 10/13), with any number in between. So new recordings are going to have to be something special. This one is.

For a start, the Ebène Quartet quite clearly think deeply about every note, every texture, every gesture – as they have demonstrated in the past, not least in their Fauré/Debussy/Ravel *Gramophone* Recording of the Year (12/08). And they have gone for nothing but the best in their choice of guest cellist: Gautier Capuçon, who you couldn't usually imagine playing second cello to anyone. The lower instruments are the engine room of the Quintet, and this performance demonstrates that as finely as any. For all the purity and wonder of Pierre Colombet's first violin, it's the combination of Capuçon and Raphaël Merlin on the bottom line that truly drives the music along.

The detailing, too, is remarkable, whether it be the way the cello duet of the first movement's second subject is nuanced and inflected, pulling just enough at the pulse to give it individuality and shape; the way they don't overplay the slow movement's central convulsion but still manage to make the return of the opening console even as it breaks the heart; or the authentic Viennese lilt of the finale, an *Apfelstrudel* flavoured, as only French players can, with a generous dash of *crème pâtissière*. And still this is a performance that makes you come back for seconds.

The standard coupling for the Quintet is usually the *Quartettsatz*. Here, however, the Ebène offer something unique: a set of arrangements of five generally sad songs for which they are joined by Laurène Durantel on double bass and the dark baritone of Matthias Goerne, making a rather special appendix to his series of piano-accompanied Schubert Lieder for Harmonia Mundi. **David Thresher**

Stravinsky

The Soldier's Tale

Fred Child narr Jared McGuire, Jeff Biehl *spkrs*

Tianwa Yang *vn* Virginia Arts Festival Players /

JoAnn Falletta

Naxos © 8 573537 (58' • DDD)



This new version of Stravinsky's morality tale for dancers, actors and musicians was

recorded in tandem with a production by Pamela Berlin at the Virginia Arts Festival last year. For UK listeners it might seem a bit un-starry for a work that has always attracted big-name actors, among them John Gielgud, Tom Courtenay and Vanessa Redgrave for recordings in English, and Jean Cocteau and Gérard Depardieu in French. But Fred Child, who narrates the piece here, is the popular presenter of a well-known classical music radio show in the USA, while Jared McGuire (the Soldier) and Jeff Biehl (the Devil), both members of New York's Ensemble Studio Theatre, have distinguished Stateside stage careers.

It's a fine performance all round, in fact. Ensemble values are high, with actors and instrumentalists nicely integrated and a strong sense of give and take that reflects the recording's theatrical origins. Violinist Tianwa Yang is dexterous but unshowy in her all-important solos, but there's never any sense of her attempting to upstage the

Virginia Arts Festival Chamber Players, all of whom are very much her match in terms of virtuoso refinement. Conductor JoAnn Falletta steers the work more towards sophisticated cabaret than creepy folk tale: we're very conscious here of its monetarist satire and of the flashes forward, dramatically and musically, to *The Rake's Progress*.

Michael Flanders and Kitty Black's translation is used, which Berlin has tweaked into American English in places. Child sounds very knowing and coolly ironic. McGuire negotiates the thin dividing line between appealing innocence and impetuous stupidity impeccably, while Biehl, avoiding caricature in his various disguises, is all insidious charm and seductive malevolence. I have a soft spot for Shlomo Mintz's French-language version on *Naïve*, with Gérard and Guillaume Depardieu, father and son, outstanding as Devil and Soldier respectively. But this is certainly a contender if you prefer the piece in English, and an attractive bargain to boot.

Tim Ashley

Selected comparison:

G & G Depardieu, Mintz (6/978) (NAXOS) V5371

'Fantasia'

Bernstein *Candide* – Overture **Borodin** *Prince Igor* – Polovtsian Dances^a **Dukas** *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*^a **Shostakovich** *Five Pieces*^a **Stravinsky** *The Firebird* – Suite^a **Alliage Quintet** with ^a**Sabine Meyer** cl
Sony Classical © 88875 19097-2 (56' • DDD)



Cocktail-lounge Borodin has limited appeal. Smoky saxophones slink and shimmy through the Polovtsian Dances to open this unusual disc from the Alliage Quintet and Sabine Meyer. The various reworkings for clarinet, four saxophones and piano are entertaining and inventive (six different arrangers are credited) but are no substitute for the full orchestral garb for which they were composed. The performers set out to explore exotic, fairytale scores, hence Borodin, with its oriental shades of *Kismet* glamour, and Stravinsky's *Firebird*. The Disney connection to Dukas's *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, baritone saxophone stepping in for bassoon, presumably lends the disc its 'Fantasia' title.

From Meyer's clarinet riding thermals as the *Firebird*, down to Sebastian Pottmeier's earthy baritone sax, an array of colours are on display. Performances

are virtuoso: the 20-minute arrangement of *The Firebird* highlights includes opportunities for flutter-tonguing, while the Infernal Dance bumps and grinds like Michael Nyman's score to *The Draughtsman's Contract*. *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* bounces along merrily, but too often the intervention of the piano signals the limitations in the ensemble's palette in such a Technicolor score. The Overture to *Candide* works well, sassy and suave in the best Broadway manner.

The least familiar works are the five Shostakovich pieces that round off the disc. Scavenged from various film scores and ballets by the composer's friend Levon Atovmian and arranged for two violins and piano, they transfer beguilingly to the reedy ensemble. There is a good deal of innocent charm here, with only the final Polka uncovering Shostakovich's sardonic wit. **Mark Pullinger**

'Flashback'

Denisov Alto Saxophone Sonata **Gál** Suite, Op 102b **Heider** Sonata in Jazz **Hindemith** Alto Saxophone Sonata **Schulhoff** Hot Sonata **Guido Bäumer** sax **Aladár Rácz** pf
Odradek © ODRCD331 (68' • DDD)



The saxophone has a unique status among instruments in having its original reason for

existing – as an instrument that would blend seamlessly inside a wind ensemble – utterly usurped by subsequent events. American jazz musicians transformed it from blending into anything much into the source of a kaleidoscope of fiercely independent voices, and composers have never quite been sure how to deal with the fallout. Ignoring jazz feels wantonly perverse; but embracing the music can bring with it a whole bunch of cultural misunderstandings.

All things considered, Guido Bäumer and Aladár Rácz's recital disc of mid-20th-century music for saxophone and piano is a very low-key record, with only Edison Denisov's 1970 Alto Saxophone Sonata rescuing the project from a prevailing blandness. Always a canny operator, Denisov realises that a score merely referencing jazz heat and stylistic fingerprints will register as second-hand, and instead pushes his notation to such extremes that the saxophonist is obliged to think in the moment. The undulating forms of the opening movements – a brutal clash of distilled jazz harmonies thrown to the atonal wolves – is bracing; then the

free-tempo second movement leapfrogs through a remarkably rapid turnover of events, as if Denisov were improvising on manuscript paper.

Elsewhere we're dealing with diminishing returns. Hans Gál's Saxophone Sonata (1949) is generic mid-century classicism and Bäumer overeggs its melodic contours, pumping something that is essentially flaccid with Romantic heat. Hindemith's 1943 Sonata, originally for alto horn but authorised for performance on alto saxophone by the composer, feels like a coldly professional score more engaging to play than hear. Erwin Schulhoff's *Hot Sonata* (1930) and especially Werner Heider's *Sonata in Jazz* (1954) are painfully prim, and Bäumer and Rácz don't help their cause by playing with an ingratiating smile – every syncopated figure forced behind inverted commas, every blue note spelt out in case we miss the jazz reference. As I say, thank goodness for Edison Denisov. **Philip Clark**

'Imitatio'

Biber Balletti lamentabili a 4. Battalia. Serenada a 5. Sonata No 6 **Kerll** Halter, der steyrische Hirt. Sonata a 3 **Poglietti** Toccata sopra la Ribellione di Hungheria **Schmelzer** Serenata a 5. Sonata for Violin and Viola. Sonata rappresentativa
Ricercar Consort
Mirare © MIR302 (79' • DDD)



The preoccupation with representation (or, perhaps more accurately, mimesis)

in instrumental music preoccupied Baroque composers from the time of Monteverdi onwards, reaching a peak in the work of Biber, Schmelzer and others working in the orbit of the Habsburg court. The appeal to a modern audience (and indeed, to modern performers) is easily grasped, but whether the conceit can sustain a generously filled CD is a moot point – or so I thought on reading the track-listing for this one. I needn't have worried.

The best-known works here address topics previously treated by Janequin in the vocal sphere (respectively, Schmelzer's sonata depicting birdsong and Biber's portraying the progress of a battle). Biber arguably outdoes his rival in the means he deploys, including a 'prepared' bass viol, 'Bartók' pizzicato and a quasi-aleatoric section representing the hubbub of the drunken soldiery. Unsurprisingly, these pieces have been recorded before, but the immediacy of the



Germaine Tailleferre's Concertino is among the works featured on Diana Ambache's new album of music by French female composers

sound recording and the performers' infectious zest make these interpretations stand out. These warhorses of *musica representativa* are complemented by lesser-known works, for some of which it is not necessary to know the programme to enjoy them. Thus the short keyboard Toccata by Poglietti (played by Maude Gratton), ostensibly commemorating the suppression of a rebellion in Hungary.

But it is to Biber that the lion's share of the disc is devoted, and no wonder: every work of his stages a *coup de théâtre* that prefigures musical styles that lay centuries in the future. (There is even a walk-on part for a bass who sings a little devotional hymn, then disappears.) And if that weren't enough, the aria before the battle is as beguiling a tune as one could wish for. Delightful. **Fabrice Fitch**

'Liberté • Egalité • Sororité'

Arrieu Trio d'anches^a Bonis Scènes de la forêt^b

L Boulanger Nocturne^c Farrenc Cello Sonata^d

Tailleferre Concertino^e Viardot-Garcia Sonatine^c

^{bcd}e Diana Ambache *pf* with ^{be} Anthony Robb *fl*

^{ae} Jeremy Polmear *ob* ^{ae} Neyrie Ashworth *cl*

^{ae} Philip Gibbon *bn* ^{be} Richard Dille *hn*

^e David Juritz, ^e Richard Milone *vns* ^e Ilona Bondar *va*

^{de} Rebecca Knight *vc* ^e Tim Amherst *db*

^eSue Rothstein *hp* ^eTristan Fry *perc*
Ambache © AMB2606 (74' • DDD)



The latest album from Diana Ambache's own label explores six works

written between 1861 and 1952, and quietly reminds us of the marginalisation of female composers during the Romantic and modernist periods in France, as indeed elsewhere. Of the six, only Lili Boulanger is primarily remembered for her compositional output. We think of Viardot-Garcia as singer, mistress and muse before turning to her music, while Tailleferre is rarely considered away from her male colleagues in Les Six. Of Claude Arrieu, Louise Farrenc and Mel (or Mélanie) Bonis we hear nothing much at all.

The disc is, however, variable in content. Farrenc's 1861 Cello Sonata, indebted to Mendelssohn and Schumann, is unremarkable except for its swaying central Barcarolle, and the pastoral-neoclassical blend of Arrieu's Reed Trio (1936) isn't always ideally successful. Ambache compares Bonis – in whom

both sexual and religious impulses ran strong – to Messiaen, though one is more frequently reminded of Debussy, her fellow composition pupil: *Scènes de la forêt* (1907), the disc's real find, opens in imitation of *Pelléas*, though the best of it has some of the grave eloquence of Boulanger's 1911 Nocturne. The bravura Hispanicism of Viardot-Garcia's *Sonatine* (1874) anticipates Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole*. Tailleferre's beautifully scored 1952 Concertino has charm, sophisticated elegance and a central Nocturne of considerable sensuality.

Technically accomplished and refined as always, Ambache proves a persuasive guide to this repertoire, though there are occasional inequalities elsewhere. Rebecca Knight, though excellent, doesn't make the case for Farrenc's Sonata. We're not told which violinist is playing which work, and Boulanger's Nocturne gets a finer performance than Viardot-Garcia's *Sonatine*, where you notice some abrasion in the tone. *Scènes de la forêt* is really a work for flute and two accompanists rather than a unified trio, and Anthony Robb shines in it, as indeed he also does in Tailleferre's Concertino. The recording itself is exemplary and beautifully engineered.

Tim Ashley

Frederica von Stade

David Patrick Stearns celebrates the artistry of one of the USA's most-loved mezzo-sopranos, a singer whose repertoire ranges from Monteverdi to the brand new

For no good reason, singers cycle in and out of the role of Cherubino, fast and frequently. The welcome exception is Frederica von Stade. With her honeyed voice, aristocratic features and colt-ish energy, 'Flicka' (as she is widely known) was the Cherubino of choice for at least two decades, whether led by Herbert von Karajan, Sir Georg Solti or James Levine in productions directed by Giorgio Strehler, Sir Peter Hall and Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. In counterpoint, she also sang weightier roles in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Werther* before going into even darker, more desperate operatic regions in recent years, playing the bewildered trailer-park mother of a murderer in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* and the bitter dowager of Ricky Ian Gordon's *A Coffin in Egypt*, a role she created in 2014.

Though the voice has darkened since her early *bel canto* opera years, it is always itself, marked by pastel colours and soft attacks: her notes aren't announced so much as built over nano-seconds. The voice is beautifully integrated: her narrow, fast vibrato grows directly out of the basic tone of her voice. Equally natural was the coloratura technique in her early years, employed in a natural, non-aggressive manner that never felt like a stunt and was always part of the characterization. Such an integrated voice tends to highlight the similarities, rather than differences, in the most disparate composers: the ambitious 'Voyage à Paris' recital – disc 13 in the brand-new 'Frederica von Stade: The Complete Columbia Recital Albums' but also available separately – shows Poulenc and Messiaen as having common word-painting priorities, partly because she calls attention more to the music than to herself. And because her vocal technique is so much from the neck down, you never see (and rarely hear) the work that goes into her singing.

With the exception of her compellingly chilly Marquise de Merteuil in

the Conrad Susa opera *Dangerous Liaisons*, von Stade characterizations have a humanity that engages your protective instincts. You can't not care about her. The plaintive voice is one factor; her unguarded infectious energy is another. Even when, in *A Coffin in Egypt*, she confesses to being an abject snob, von Stade handles it conspiratorially, as if to say, 'This is our little secret'. Her original voice teacher Sebastian Engelberg told her that 'singing comes from the bottom of your heart' – advice she has consistently followed.

Hailing from the genteel horse country of New Jersey, von Stade is descended from polo champions and originally aspired to sing on Broadway. But while at the Mannes College of Music (and working as a Tiffany sales girl in Manhattan), she was pointed toward the Metropolitan Opera apprentice programme starting in 1970. After her Santa Fe Opera breakthrough in 1971 singing Cherubino, doors seem to fly open. Her CBS recording career began in 1975 with 'Arias and Duets', a collaboration with Judith Blegan and a chamber ensemble including then-trumpeter Gerard Schwarz – also featured in the new Sony Classical box – and it remains one

of her most distinctive albums, a *Haus-Konzert* with a version of Chausson's *Chanson perpétuelle*, Op 37 that's as fine as anything she ever recorded.

From there, her career can be charted geographically, from Europe to New York to San Francisco. For the remainder of the 1970s, she and her husband Peter Elkus started a family in Paris – a period that yielded some 17 opera recordings, including unlikely items by Haydn and Rameau, one of the best-ever recordings of *Werther*, plus the unexpected gem, Rossini's *Otello*, with vocal virtuosity and dramatic content fusing in ways that too seldom happen in *bel canto*.

After a seven-season absence from the Met, she returned in 1982 and settled on Long Island

DEFINING MOMENTS

•1971 – *The breakthrough Cherubino*

Santa Fe Opera's *Le nozze di Figaro* came with two discoveries that year, Kiri Te Kanawa as the Countess and von Stade as Cherubino. The production also began an artistic partnership between the two singers – often resulting in joint concerts.

•1978 – *Pelléas et Mélisande recording with Herbert von Karajan*

Von Stade's repertoire stretches from Monteverdi to modern neo-tonalists, but her single most important speciality is French opera, from Rameau to Poulenc. *Mélisande* is her best-known characterization (a role captured in Karajan's long-awaited EMI studio recording).

•1982 – *Return to the Metropolitan Opera*

It took Idamante in *Idomeneo* to bring her back to the Met – and in a rare collaboration with a certain singer whose repertoire rarely overlapped with hers – Luciano Pavarotti, then in one of his best periods.

•1988 – *Show Boat on record*

Von Stade's portrayal of Magnolia in *Show Boat* is among her more affecting characterizations – and in an EMI recording, conducted by John McGlinn, that began a radical re-evaluation of Broadway scores with original orchestration and historically informed interpretation.

•1990 – *The divorce*

After splitting with her longtime husband, and vocal coach, Peter Elkus, her career became West Coast-based.

•2000 – *Dead Man Walking*

Though von Stade's association with San Francisco-based Jake Heggie began before this opera, it represents their biggest collaboration to date, and signalled her arrival as a character actress who was able to disappear into a role yet still be her vocal self.



with her family, trying out heavier Verdi roles in the privacy of her studio, but joking that she sounded like the cartoon character Minnie Mouse. In another keen assessment of her limitations, she kept her Octavian – which she'd recorded for Philips back in 1976 – out of the Metropolitan Opera house because the theatre was too big. Her recordings – later on RCA – became more specialized with medium-weight repertoire such as Massenet's *Chérubin*.

Her Cherubino continued to surface on live recordings and videos, and it's hard to decide between them. One of her personal favorites was the 1973 Strehler production in Paris with José van Dam, Mirella Freni and Gundula Janowitz, once available on video but now only on sound-only format in Opera Depot (10867-3). Most widely available is the 1973 Peter Hall-directed Glyndebourne video (ArtHaus Musik, 101 089), a lovely traditional production with Kiri Te Kanawa. The Met's 1985 somewhat eccentric Jean-Pierre Ponnelle production put her in an extravagant wig that would bury a lesser characterization. But then, von Stade was one to circumvent any number of circumstances: in Rameau's *Dardanus* at the Opéra de Paris, she once confessed to restaging the production while the director was away to insure better vocal projection.

But the dissolution of her marriage to Elkus was full of intractable

Her voice teacher told her that 'singing comes from the bottom of your heart' – advice she has consistently followed

manoeuvres. The 1990 divorce was followed by an appeal that set legal precedents. Having been her vocal coach, her husband had a claim to money earned through her success as a singer. During that period, von Stade said the stage was the one place she was safe from lawyers.

Remarried to San Francisco businessman Michael Gorman, she re-focused her career to the West Coast, and with that, came more contemporary opera. An important bond was formed with the composer Jake Heggie, then working in the San Francisco Opera press office and finding his way back to composing in his current neo-tonal language. To date, he has written three operatic roles for her, most recently in *Great Scott* last year. Retirements have been announced – from the opera stage, from the city of New York – but none has stuck.

And the post-retirement roles have been no small challenge. Though Gordon's *A Coffin in Egypt* was crafted to the current state of her voice, von Stade hasn't been immune to memory issues, but conquered them while also going back into vocal training. Singing isn't the centre of her life these days – she's a music-education volunteer in inner-city schools in Oakland, CA. In a phone interview she conducted while walking her dog, she told me that she doesn't think of herself as having been that big an opera star. Certainly, she was always the star without grandeur. But that only made her public love her more. **G**

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



'Frederica von Stade: The Complete Columbia Recital Albums'

Frederica von Stade
with various artists
Sony Classical
© 18

Instrumental



Patrick Rucker on Garrick Ohlsson's new Smetana album:

'It's easy to feel that Smetana's ambition to do for the polka what Chopin did for the mazurka was fully realised' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 66](#)



Charlotte Gardner listens to Telemann from Luigi de Filippi:

'It's beautifully done, and its slightly more maboganied hue and weight make it a welcome alternative' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 67](#)

Brahms

Bach/Brahms Chaconne from BWV1004

Brahms Klavierstücke, Op 76. Two Rhapsodies, Op 79. Seven Piano Pieces, Op 116

Anna Vinnitskaya *pf*

Alpha © ALPHA231 (73' • DDD)



Along with many others who heard Anna Vinnitskaya's recording of Prokofiev

and Ravel concertos after her 2007 victory at the Queen Elisabeth Competition, I was mightily impressed by her, both as a musician and as a pianist. Encountering her new recording of Brahms, however, was a bit perplexing, so unconventional can her interpretations be. Only after repeated listening have some of the performances seemed fully persuasive.

The decision to place Brahms's transcription of the Bach Chaconne at the head of the programme was a singularly unhappy one. No attempt is made at Baroque style, much less one filtered through Brahms's 19th-century lens. Instead we hear deep seriousness of approach, rigidly unvaried arpeggiation and careful observation of staccatos where marked. Combined, they do not add up to a compelling reading.

Among the original works, some stand out as particularly fine. In Op 76, the B minor Capriccio has a sparkle that enlivens an unusually thorough exploration of the inner polyphony. The A flat Intermezzo has the delicacy of a small music box and a welcoming graciousness attends the A major Intermezzo. In Op 116, the melancholy languor of the A minor Intermezzo is thoroughly convincing, and two of the three Intermezzos in E (minor and major, the fifth and sixth of the set) have an understated subtlety.

On the other hand, in the most extended of the original works, the B minor Rhapsody from Op 79, Vinnitskaya's touch seems harshly aggressive, with hectic tempi

pressed to the maximum, occasionally verging on hysteria. Elsewhere, as in the opening piece of Op 76 or the last of Op 116, the frenetic pace is driven, with moments of relaxation or reflective repose that never quite materialise. **Patrick Rucker**

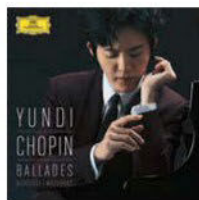
Chopin

Four Ballades. Berceuse, Op 57.

Four Mazurkas, Op 17

Yundi *pf*

DG © 481 2443DH (56' • DDD)



Yundi first came to public attention in 2000 when, as simple Yundi Li, he became

the youngest-ever winner of the International Chopin Competition in Warsaw. The assumption since then has been that *ipso facto* he is a great Chopin player – and, indeed, many of his subsequent recordings of the composer have much to commend them. One has to admire the exceptional technical command and accuracy, prerequisites of success in the competitive Chinese system of musical education, but too often in the four Ballades presented here that is all you get.

Revealingly, in the accompanying booklet Yundi is keen to 'dismiss any notion of sentimentality, stressing the need for a Chopin pianist to avoid being either mannered or emphatic'. This is a perfectly tenable view of the composer but one that I do not share. It is too narrow, too prescriptive. The greatest Chopin players have the (unteachable?) ability to combine what used to be termed masculine and feminine aspects of the composer, and Yundi's way with the Ballades suggests an asexual version of him, where intimacy is viewed objectively, passion is manufactured and kept under control. Charm comes at a premium.

There are moments when Yundi can be confiding and even genial – the opening of the Second Ballade, for instance, the Berceuse and the final Mazurka from the

Op 17 set – and, to be fair, this is a disc with which I felt more comfortable the longer it went on. The often clouded passagework of the Fourth Ballade's final pages is lucidly articulated by minimal use of the sustaining pedal. 'Powerful playing comes from the fingers, not the feet,' says Yundi. 'For me, the pedal is principally for refining the colour.'

Overall, though, this is not the kind of Chopin-playing I warm to. I daresay Yundi's millions of fans worldwide will not be disappointed but I wonder how many will have listened to Cortot, Moiseiwitsch, Cherkassky, Rubinstein, Lipatti and other great pianists in this repertoire, artists who became known by a single name on merit – not from some marketing strategy.

Jeremy Nicholas

Dutilleux • Chopin

Chopin Four Ballades

Dutilleux Piano Sonata, Op 1. Trois Préludes

Arthur Ancelle *pf*

Melodiya © MELCD100 2399 (73' • DDD)

Dutilleux • Liszt

'Miroirs'

Dutilleux Piano Sonata, Op 1. Trois Préludes

Liszt Angelus, S163 No 1. Klavierstück, S192 No 3.

Mephisto Waltz, S514 No 1. Nuages gris, S199.

Valse oubliée, S215 No 1

Jonas Vitaud *pf*

NoMadMusic © NMM028 (69' • DDD)



Recordings of Dutilleux's early, substantial and rather difficult First Piano Sonata are no longer rare events, especially in his 2016 centenary. Here are two solid, masterful and divergent interpretations of the sonata and the *Trois Préludes*. Jonas Vitaud positions each prelude within an all-Liszt group. Arthur Ancelle places the *Préludes* together in sequence, and prefaces the sonata with Chopin's four Ballades.



Yundi, International Chopin Competition winner in 2000, builds his latest disc around the composer's four Ballades

Ancelle's dapper and debonair way with Dutilleux's first movement brings out the music's wry rhythmic displacements, dry-point staccatos and animated surface elegance. Vitaud, by contrast, is more of a dramatist, ready to underscore piquant melodies and sudden mood shifts with rubato emphasis.

In the central Lied, Ancelle's tempo is closer to Dutilleux's metronome marking than Vitaud's slower rendition, yet Vitaud's stricter attention to the carefully scaled dynamics yields a more colourful canvas. Concerning the lengthy and inventive Chorale and Variations, each pianist stands out in different ways. Here Ancelle heeds the composer's numerous tempo adjustments, articulates polyrhythms accurately and conveys the frequent requests for *brillante* passagework with cutting-edge brilliance. Yet Vitaud's fingerwork is suppler, more even and more electrifying; for proof, simply compare both pianists in Var 4's *très léger* staccato repeated notes and the motoric, Prokofiev-like sequences towards the end.

In Dutilleux's *Préludes*, Vitaud mainly focuses on pianistic sheen, while Ancelle offers more refinement in regard to voicing chords or highlighting bass-lines and

harmonic felicities. You hear this, for example, in No 2's virtuoso outbursts and in No 3's rapid two-handed lines in contrary motion. On the other hand, Vitaud's approach makes sense in a Lisztian context, where the bass rumblings and chirping trills in No 1 naturally flow out of Liszt's 'Angelus' beforehand and the little Liszt *Klavierstück* that follows. *Valse oubliée* No 1 is a tad icy and businesslike, whereas these qualities befit the strangely stark *Nuages gris*. I would have expected a more scintillating, less studio-bound *Mephisto Waltz* No 1, given Vitaud's aforementioned virtuoso flair.

The taut, line-oriented pianism throughout Ancelle's Chopin Ballades purges decades' worth of expressive clichés from these over-recorded scores. What's missing, however, is the heroic sweep, the singing impulse and the ardent drama distinguishing disparate Ballade cycles by Moravec, Perahia, Zimerman, Arrau and Rubinstein. In all, these releases are valuable for the Dutilleux selections, less so for the Liszt and Chopin.

Jed Distler

Dvořák

From the Bohemian Forest, Op 68 B133.
Piano Trio No 4, 'Dumky', Op 90 B520

Artur Pizarro, Rinaldo Zhok *pf*
Odradek © ODRCD323 (63' • DDD)



Dvořák left a rich legacy of piano duets, wrenching the genre clean out of the salon.

As Artur Pizarro and Rinaldo Zhok write: 'Playing piano four hands (even more than performing on two pianos) represents the most profound and complex form of music-making together.' That's certainly the case in the two works on their new disc, but Pizarro and Zhok palpably relish the challenges and their Yamaha is bright and immediate-sounding.

From the Bohemian Forest is rendered with great vividness, be it the insidiously memorable melody of 'In the Spinning-Room' or the 'Witches' Sabbath', which opens with a galumphing rhythm, before the mood darkens and the harmonies become sour and twisted. A number such as 'On the Watch' demands precision-engineered ensemble, which is exactly what Pizarro and Zhok give us, and their élan at the close of this piece is infectious. If 'Silent Woods' will never sound as rapt



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Benjamin Nicholas plays Elgar on the new Dobson organ of Merton College, Oxford

as it can in Dvořák's later reworking for cello, the last movement, 'In Troubled Times', is impressive for the way the two pianists maintain clarity of texture, despite the extensive use of the keyboard's lower range.

Dvořák reworked his *Dumky* Trio for piano duet at the request of his publisher Simrock. This is no mere transcription but a true rethinking of the original. After all, you can hardly replicate such moments as the original trio's opening, with fraught cello set against piano, or the way the finale builds from *Lento* to a scrubbingly intense *Vivace*. The innate tension between piano and strings may have been lost, but in its place is a sense of just how starkly daring this work is – not just in its harmonic language but also the way it unfolds, demanding skilful pacing from the pianists, who need to be alive to Dvořák's ever-changing tempi and moods. This Pizarro and Zhok do to compelling effect.

An absorbing and entertaining disc – let's hope these two have more in store for us.

Harriet Smith

Elgar

Organ Sonata, Op 28. Vesper Voluntaries, Op 14. 'Enigma' Variations, Op 36 – Nimrod (transcr WH Harris). The Kingdom, Op 51 – Prelude (transcr H Brewer). Gavotte (transcr Lemare)

Benjamin Nicholas *org*

Delphian © DCD34162 (69' • DDD). Played on the Dobson organ of Merton College, Oxford



In 2013 Oxford's Merton College unveiled its new Dobson organ, a three-manual, 44-stop instrument, built in the US and voiced on English Romantic lines. An acclaimed first recording (7/14) consisted of a mixed programme of Bach, Dupré, Messiaen and Stanley. For this second volume, Merton's Director of Music, Benjamin Nicholas, displays his Elgarian credentials in a typically unfussy and well-balanced selection of original and transcribed works.

He opens with the substantial Op 28 Sonata in G of 1895, in a lithe performance, full of beautifully shaped phrasing. His imaginative brush strokes help to emphasise Elgar's strongly contrapuntal approach in this tightly organised and quasi-symphonic work. There are some lovely 'singing' registers, particularly at 8ft pitch in the *Allegretto*, and in the *Andante espressivo* Nicholas calculates just the correct amount of hesitancy and Elgarian introspection,

aided by some shimmering string registers. The finale spins along with a jaunty virility. All that is missing is the clarion call from a true English Tuba stop in the energetic closing paragraph, the Major Trumpet lacking the requisite heft. However, this stop has a much more effective impact in William Harris's transcription of 'Nimrod', which is built up to perfection.

Edwin Lemare's delightful transcription of the early violin Gavotte is reminiscent of Sullivan at his most dainty, crossed with a hint of the fairground organ. Of greater interest is the Prelude to *The Kingdom*, the last and most technically challenging of Herbert Brewer's organ transcriptions, here receiving its first (and authoritative) recording. Elgar's only other original organ work, the eight *Vesper Voluntaries*, Op 14, rounds off this enjoyable disc in polished and affectionate style.

Malcolm Riley

Ellington

Sacred Concerts Suite. Bird of Paradise. Black and Tan Fantasy. Black Beauty. Blues. The Clothed Woman. Fleurette africaine. Dancers in Love. The Lake. Lotus Blossom. Melancholia. Reflections in D. The Single Petal of a Rose. Soda Fountain Rag. Swampy River

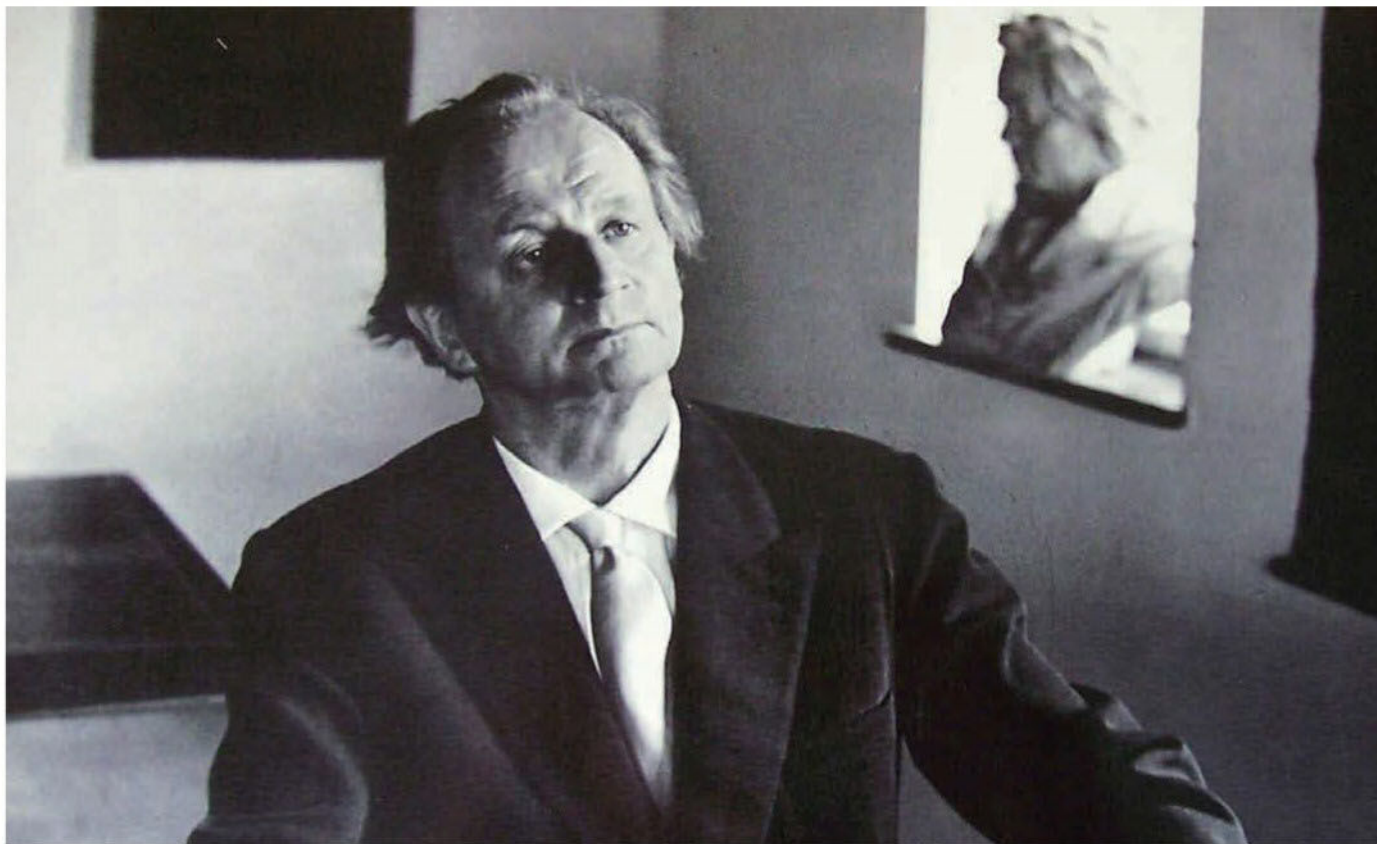
Luigi Palombi *pf*

Dynamic © CDS7743 (59' • DDD)

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

WILHELM KEMPF'S BEETHOVEN

Richard Osborne welcomes two newly transferred collections of the German pianist's recordings for 78s



'Preternaturally gifted and blessed with a sanguine temperament': Kempff's early Beethoven shows him at his freshest

There is a sense in which Wilhelm Kempff's Beethoven legacy (and where the 32 piano sonatas are concerned there is none greater on record) resembles a distinguished building whose original state has been obscured by the accretions of time. Nowadays architectural historians can create isometric projections to show us such states. And that is more or less what we have here in this pair of immaculately sourced two-CD sets. This is the Kempff Beethoven house as he originally designed it.

The son of an organ-playing pastor, with a cultural hinterland not dissimilar to that of his near-contemporary Wilhelm Furtwängler, the 25-year-old Kempff was already something of a cult figure in Germany and Scandinavia (Sibelius was a devotee) at the time of his first recording in 1920. That recording of Beethoven's Bagatelle in C, Op 33, boasts an audible imprecation ('Donnerwetter!' Kempff later revealed) after a mis-hit high F.

It is astonishing that until the mid-1950s Kempff's playing was known in Britain

(where he made his belated debut in 1951) only to collectors of such Polydor 78s as occasionally reached these shores. Looking through old copies of *Gramophone*, one notes Alec Robertson's praise for a wittily virtuoso account of Beethoven's late *Rage over a Lost Penny*; Compton Mackenzie singling out Kempff's 1932 recording of the Op 78 Piano Sonata; and a moving entry in a 1943 'Reader's Choice' in which Lt Cpl GA Spire chooses Kempff's 1936 recording of the Op 110 Piano Sonata. 'A stone's throw from heaven. Never had I heard such magnificent playing.'

One Polydor set which was known and revered was Kempff's 1936 recording of the *Hammerklavier* Sonata, a reading which was already the stuff of legends in the 1920s. Bryce Morrison, in his booklet essay, judges this to be the set's crowning glory; a performance whose 'pellucid texture and subtlety' puts it at a distant remove from other more 'hectoring or barn-storming readings'. This is particularly true of the first movement, where Kempff observes

Beethoven's written marking, a plain *Allegro*, rather than the helter-skelter metronome that Schnabel and others elected to pursue. After an elfin Scherzo, the account of the slow movement exhibits a depth of feeling and simplicity of utterance the like of which I have never previously encountered.

Kempff loved recording. Preternaturally gifted and blessed with a sanguine temperament, he was unfazed by the risks pianists faced in pre-edit days. Which is why, the odd finger-slip and concentration lapse notwithstanding, what we have here are the essentials of his art and craft: luminous and free-ranging musical thought, clear voicings, shrewdly lightened bass-lines and an endlessly inventive way with trills and appoggiaturas. The 1936 account of Op 111 shows him at his least consistent, and he would record more concentrated accounts of *Les adieux* in 1951 and 1964. But even in 1928 this is a lovely reading, interestingly similar to that of fellow Heinrich Barth pupil Arthur Schnabel in his classic 1962 RCA recording (6/63).

The set of four of the five piano concertos is memorable for the superlative and beautifully recorded studio accounts of the Third and Fourth concertos, which Kempff made with Paul van Kempen in Berlin in 1942 and 1940. The profoundly felt calm of the slow movement of the Third Concerto has to be heard to be believed, as does Kempff's playing of the recitatives in the slow movement of the Fourth. Furtwängler aside, there was probably no better Beethoven conductor in Germany at the time than Paul van Kempen. If he and not Peter Raabe had been in charge of Kempff's 1936 recording of the *Emperor* Concerto (sounding much better here in Mark Obert-Thorn's transfers than in DG's own), it might have been rather more interesting.

As a zesty *bonne bouche* we have Kempff's 1925 acoustic recording of the First Concerto. The orchestral sound may be a touch dim but the piano is splendidly defined. As was often the case, no conductor is named. Harriet Smith, in a superb booklet essay on Kempff, wonders if he himself directed. It's unlikely. A better bet might be the Staatskapelle's recently appointed chief conductor, the 35-year-old Erich Kleiber. Whoever it is, the conducting is first-rate in the outer movements – Kempff's lofty playing in the *Largo* rather defeats the orchestra – both in its pacing and in its inch-perfect response to Kempff's racy, freely imagined reading. The finale, a true *Allegro scherzando*, is a real *tour de force*, though why the orchestra jams on the breaks at bars 136-38 (and 281-83) is not clear. If it's a joke, it's not one which wears well on record.

What does wear well is Kempff's third-movement cadenza, a breezy affair, positively Mozartian in its impishness. A prolific (and performed) composer, Kempff liked to write his own cadenzas. Those he created for the Third Concerto suit his reflective reading rather better than Beethoven's rather more extrovert efforts, though Kempff's cadenzas for the Fourth Concerto have generally found less favour.

Here, then, are two fascinating sets. As Claudio Arrau, another revered but very different Titan of Beethoven interpretation once remarked, 'Whom do I enjoy? I enjoy Kempff. Kempff always.' **G**

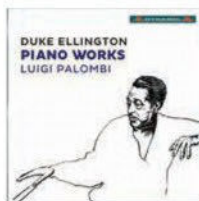
THE RECORDINGS



Beethoven The Late Sonatas
Wilhelm Kempff (1925-38)
APR **B** ② APR6018



Beethoven Piano Concertos **G**
Wilhelm Kempff (1925-42)
APR **B** ② APR6019



Luigi Palombi's disc of Duke Ellington sets up a discussion of those ever-problematic

issues raised whenever classical pianists co-opt classic material by the jazz greats nicely. Just why would anyone want to hear a musician schooled in Brahms or Chopin play Ellington? Especially when Ellington's own records are but a mouse-click away.

Palombi's title – 'Piano Works' – ought to give any self-respecting jazz fan the heebie-jeebies, implying as it does that these Ellington pieces are preserved in aspic rather than being used as starting points for reinterpretation and improvisation. *Black and Tan Fantasy*, landmark early Ellington recorded by his orchestra in 1927, and the audaciously modernistic *The Clothed Woman*, cut in 1947, never were piano works – and presuming that a boiled-down transcription of an orchestral composition originally tailored to showcase Ellington's illustrious instrumental soloists might be tackled with the same interpretative strategies that you bring to a Liszt transcription would be a mistake.

But Palombi won me over pretty much from the start. The only occasion Ellington himself officially recorded his first documented composition, *Soda Fountain Rag*, on his 1972 album 'Live at the Whitney', he tripped over his fingers – but Palombi's nimble trot through its high-velocity stride piano figurations makes it shine. And generally this is a well-argued programme. *Fleur-de-afrique*, a high point of Ellington's 1962 album 'Money Jungle' with Charles Mingus (bass) and Max Roach (drums), throws light on the Satie-like busy stillness of its apparently serene but actually volatile triadic patterns, while the surreal melt of harmonic non sequiturs that define *The Clothed Woman* are lent powerful objectivity without the jazz-orchestra filling.

All that said, there is, of course, no substitute for hearing Ellington play Ellington. The three extracts from the *Sacred Concerts* feel lost plucked from their original context, and while Palombi's take on Ellington's pirouetting *Dancers in Love* is charm itself, the liteness of Ellington's own version on that same 1972 Whitney record is beyond transcription. **Philip Clark**

Haydn

Piano Sonatas – No 31, HobXVI/46; No 33, HobXVI/20; No 47, HobXVI/32; No 49, HobXVI/49
Enrique Bagaría *pf*
Eudora **F** EUD-SACD1601 (83' • DDD/DSD)



Barcelona-born Enrique Bagaría has chosen four of Haydn's most striking

keyboard sonatas and talks in an engaging booklet essay about his close identification with the music's combination of a sense of balance and a lack of inhibition.

Certainly that enthusiasm translates to the keyboard and his account of the A flat major Sonata, HobXVI/46, is alive to the first movement's twists and turns, its drama and its humour, while the unexpected toccata-like outburst is dispatched with aplomb. And he offers a rapt slow movement, its conversational trills pristine. Yet this throws up an issue: Bagaría's tendency to vocalise: when the music sighs, so does he (sample tr 8, 6'42"). If that had been an isolated instance, it would have mattered little, but it happens all too frequently; if only his producer had had a quiet word with him.

Two of the sonatas Bagaría selects are classic *Sturm und Drang*, and his disc ends with the B minor, HobXVI/32 (a key rare in Haydn but which always drew from him what Richard Wigmore has succinctly described as 'vehement astringency'). Bagaría conveys its drama effectively without ever verging on the aggressive. He handles well the contrast between the sonata's gentle Minuet and its chewy Trio, though Marc-André Hamelin is particularly imaginative here; and in the tumultuously angular, obsessive finale (with its punishing repeated-note figuration), it's the Canadian who reigns supreme, daring in tempo yet not losing the drama of the silences. The C minor Sonata, HobXVI/20, is unfortunately particularly afflicted by vocalisation, and in its *Andante*, I feel Bagaría makes life difficult for himself with a grandly spacious tempo (it is marked *con moto*). His finale works well, though I'm even more drawn to Jean-Efflam Bavouzet's mercurial account. The piano sound itself is appealing but the vocalising is a distraction. **Harriet Smith**

Sonatas HobXVI/32 & 46 – selected comparisons:

Hamelin (5/07) (HYPE) CDA67554

Bavouzet (5/10) (CHAN) CHAN10586

Sonata HobXVI/20 – selected comparisons:

Bavouzet (12/11) (CHAN) CHAN10689

Hamelin (8/12) (HYPE) CDA67882

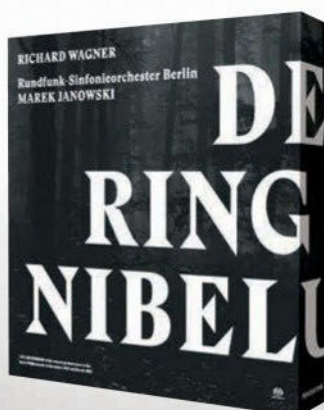
Ives

Piano Sonata No 2, 'Concord, Mass, 1840-60'
Tzimon Barto *pf* with
Christiane Palmen *fl* **Jacques Mayencourt** *va*
Capriccio **F** C5268 (56' • DDD)

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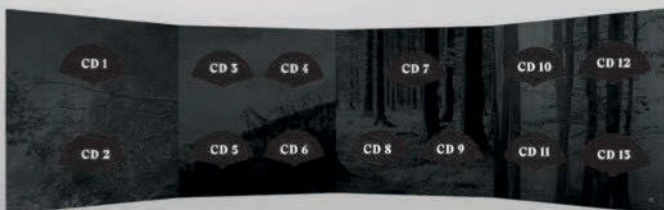
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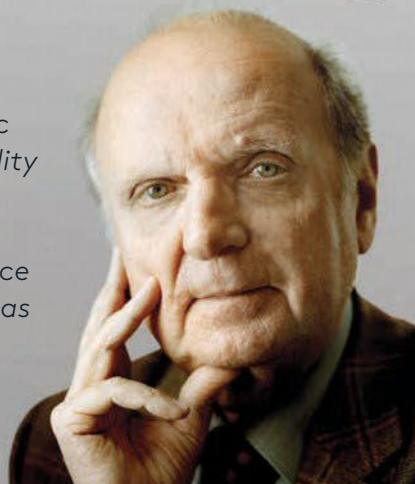
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Enrique Bagaria performs four of Haydn's most striking piano sonatas on a new Eudora SACD (review page 63)



The American pianist Tzimon Barto arrives at this new disc of Charles Ives's *Concord*

Sonata via recordings of Schubert's D894, Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and the Brahms piano concertos, which you might assume would stand him in good stead to deal with Ives's contrapuntal overload – but here his luck runs out.

Warning signs flash from the beginning. Barto takes a whopping 20-minute hike through Ives's opening movement, 'Emerson', which could generously be termed 'expansive', but in reality this dawdling pace does the connective tissue of Ives's material few favours. In his 1999 recording (Métier), Philip Mead's chancy and malleable tempi browbeat Ives's allusions to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, hymnody and popular songs into submission – a free flow of information also unearthed by Pierre Laurent Aimard's comparably feral 2004 version (Warner Classics). But Barto's approach reminds me of animated flip-books where maintaining a certain

speed to make Donald Duck dance is essential; otherwise he totters from side to side awkwardly.

And the problems accumulate. The second movement, 'Hawthorne', manages to preserve fluidity; but Barto eases off when Ives drops in his trademark ragtime band reference and, worse, imposes on it a campy pretence of swing. 'The Alcotts' soft-pedals, literally, the tangy ugly beauty of Ives's polytonal chorales, while the noisy action of said pedals is irritatingly prominent in the mix. Barto has the good sense to include the ad lib viola and flute parts, but, like the opening movement, 'Thoreau' merely drifts rather than meandering with intent.

Philip Clark

Selected comparisons:

Aimard (6/04) (WARN) 2564 60297-2

Mead (MET) MSVCD92037

Mompou

'Selected Works, Vol 2'

Cancions y danzas – selection. Scènes d'enfants. Música callada. Fantasia sobre 'Au clair de lune'. Glossa sobre 'Au clair de lune'. Tango. Chanson de berceau. El pont de Montjuïc. Trois Variations

Clélia Iruzun *pf*

Somm Céleste © SOMMCD0155 (75' • DDD)



Any piano maven who doesn't fall in love with Mompou at first hearing is either a liar

or a curmudgeon. In turn, more and more pianists are turning to Mompou's refined and recondite idiom on disc, including the London-based Brazilian Clélia Iruzun. My colleague Bryce Morrison rightly raved about her first release in a projected (though not comprehensive) Mompou cycle, citing her 'unfailing lucidity and affection' and her 'always apt and beautiful sonority' (3/13), abetted by ideal engineering.

Vol 2 holds comparable attraction and, like its predecessor, mixes and matches works from different periods of the composer's long life. The seven selections from *Cancions y danzas* that open the disc represent Mompou at his most melodically beguiling. Indeed, one might describe No 9 as a distant Catalan relative to the traditional American folksong 'Shenandoah'. Whimsical mood-changes and discreet harmonic spice in the *Scènes d'enfants*' central three 'jeux' movements reveal that Mompou was already Mompou in 1914.

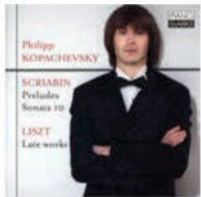
Book 1 of *Música callada* is this recital's centrepiece, and Iruzun's sensitive interpretations take Mompou's stark introspection at face value. For example, she resists milking No 3's *poco ritards* as others do, and paints Nos 4 and 5 in an austere light. She unravels the two little gems based on 'Au claire de la lune', the exquisite *Trois Variations* and the elusive 1919 Tango straightforwardly and simply, yet with carefully calibrated nuance. And her pointing up of the left-hand accompaniment lends interest to the over-long and atypically (for Mompou) bland *El pont de Montjuïc*. Three years have lapsed between Vols 1 and 2; hopefully Vol 3 will appear before 2019. **Jed Distler**

Scriabin · Liszt

Liszt Mephisto Waltz No 3, S216. Nuages gris, S199. En rêve, S207. Bagatelle sans tonalité, S216a **Scriabin** Piano Sonata No 10, Op 70. Preludes, Op 11. Vers la flamme, Op 72

Philipp Kopachevsky *pf*

Piano Classics (M) PCL0103 (66' • DDD)



Scriabin's early 24 Preludes, Op 11, suggests that dreams and occasional

nightmares can also be the soul of wit. And if 26-year-old Philipp Kopachevsky is haunting in confidentiality, he is no less powerful in storm and stress. How he relishes the gazelle-like leaps of No 8, the whimsy of No 11 or the luminous, Chopin-inspired (his Prelude No 5) arabesques of No 23. Fluent and relaxed at one level, and playing as if to an audience of friends late at night, he is no less responsive to Scriabin's volatility and uncertain temper. There is a smouldering build-up to the apocalyptic blaze of *Vers la flamme*, and if his Tenth Sonata is less suitably violent and crazed than that of Horowitz, whose febrile temperament was ideally suited to such music, it is never less than sensitive to a world of stabbing trills and obsessive wheeling around a single idea.

Kopachevsky's Liszt is arguably less convincing, unduly rapid and cool in *En rêve* (try Benjamin Grosvenor, on his first Decca disc – 10/11 – for greater subtlety and colour), less than ideally focused in the Third *Mephisto Waltz*'s driven, disjunct poetry. And although nimble-fingered in the sinister, skittering play of the *Bagatelle sans tonalité*, it again needs the sharper rhythmic focus shown by Peter Donohoe in his early EMI recording. Piano Classics' sound is close but warm, but this is something of a mixed bag. **Bryce Morrison**

Saint-Saëns

'Complete Piano Works, Vol 4'

Gavotte, Op 23. Mazurkas – No 1, Op 21; No 2, Op 24; No 3, Op 66. Menuet et Valse, Op 56. Une nuit à Lisbonne, Op 63. Souvenir d'Ismailia, Op 100. Souvenir d'Italie, Op 80. Valse gaie, Op 139. Valse mignonne, Op 104. Valse nonchalante, Op 120. Valse canariote, Op 88

Geoffrey Burleson *pf*

Grand Piano (P) GP625 (72' • DDD)



Vol 4 of Geoffrey Burleson's Saint-Saëns complete piano works leads

us dutifully through the dances and Souvenirs. And if the onetime claim that Saint-Saëns was a 'French Mozart' quickly dwindled into absurdity, there is still much to delight in, for example the *Valses nonchalante* and *gaie*. True, as Cortot tells us, Saint-Saëns's greatest keyboard success came in his five piano concertos, but solo works such as the *Etude en forme de valse* and the Theme and Variations (I recall being rounded on by a classically minded jury colleague who caught me rejoicing at the latter's deliciously camp finale) are virtuoso winners (available on Vols 1 and 2).

Both the quality and ethnicity of Chopin's 58 Mazurkas frightened off Liszt, Fauré and Debussy, who composed one apiece, though there were more substantial offerings from Balakirev, Scriabin and Szymanowski. Saint-Saëns's three examples do not add greatly to the genre and at 12'57" the *Menuet et Valse* outstays its welcome. Burleson's performances are able and musicianly but you only have to hear Stephen Hough – who can charm the birds out of the trees – in the *Valse nonchalante* (Hyperion, 5/09) to meet a teasing wit and elegance beyond Burleson's more limited scope. The *Valse gaie* is too restrained by half, making you long for greater brio and a touch of wizardry. Tributes to the Canary Islands, Lisbon, Italy and Egypt are examples of what was once cruelly described as 'the insipid fruit of Saint-Saëns's incessant travels' (Edward Sackville-West).

Burleson's notes are first-class, he has been well recorded and there is one more volume still to come.

Bryce Morrison

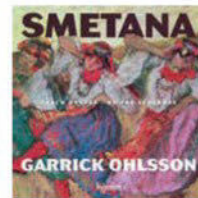
Smetana

Czech Dances – Book 1; Book 2.

On the Seashore: A Reminiscence

Garrick Ohlsson *pf*

Hyperion (P) CDA68062 (62' • DDD)



Just when you think that Garrick Ohlsson finally has all bases covered – from such

staples as a complete Chopin cycle and all the Beethoven sonatas, through the Russians to interesting Liszt, unusual Americans, Debussy and Bartók, Granados and the Weber sonatas – he strikes out in a new direction. His most recent musical passport stamp is from the Bohemian lands, where he's been exploring Smetana.

The earliest of these works is *On the Seashore*, recalling the waves near Gothenburg during Smetana's Swedish sojourn. Ohlsson's evocation of the lapping waves is subtle, giving the musical imagery its full, colourfully vivid due without overstatement. The varied characters of the four polkas constituting the first book of *Czech Dances* are aptly delineated. A large part of the flavours in these readings derives from the aplomb with which Ohlsson negotiates tempo fluctuations within individual dances, as if to the manner born. Listening to them, it's easy to feel that Smetana's ambition to do for the polka what Chopin did for the mazurka was fully realised.

Book 2 is a larger collection of several types of dances, from the brilliant Furiant and Skočná, through the robust Lancers' Dance to the Bear Dance and several varieties of stamping dances. The character of each emerges as uniquely distinctive. Sentiment abounds without a trace of sentimentality. And if nothing seems overblown, the virtuosity of the Dupák is nonetheless breathtaking.

Listening to this very enjoyable recording, I could not help but recall the performances of Rudolf Firkušný, which Ohlsson's resemble in their earnestness, sympathy and simplicity. What courage must have been required to tackle these most nationalistic of all Smetana's works, and what an accomplishment to present them not only lovingly but fairly bursting with character.

Patrick Rucker

Sweelinck

Allemande de chapelle. Ballet del granduca.

Fantasias – a 4, C2; a 4, d2; [a 2], g3; 'Auf die Manier eines Echo', C1; 're re re sol ut mi fa sol', G4. Ich fuhr mich über Rheine (ick voer al over Rhijn). Malle Sijmen. Pavana hispanica. Puer nobis nascitur. Soll es sein (Poolse almande). Toccatas – C1; d1; d5; g4; 2nd toni g2

Robert Woolley *hpd/virg*

Chandos Chaconne (P) CHAN0811 (79' • DDD)



Robert Woolley's slow-burn Sweelinck series reaches Vol 3, following the releases

of Vol 1 (devoted to organ music – 10/03) and Vol 2 (consisting, like this one, of music for harpsichord – 6/09). The future of the survey appears uncertain, however, when you see that this latest volume was recorded as long ago as 2008 and is available for download only, with CD release slated (according to the Chandos website) for 2020.

But if urgency is not the word here, I don't think it is Woolley's playing that is at fault. As before, his judicious tempi, firm control of momentum and elegant tone – his two instruments are copies of a 1644 Ruckers harpsichord and a surprisingly feisty late-16th-century Grouwels virginals – make him an utterly reliable guide to this solidly gifted and often affectingly lyrical composer. I can see, though, that this release might be better sipped at from well-chosen tracks than drunk down whole. Where Vol 2 boasted some of Sweelinck's best and most attractive compositions (including the variation sets *Unter der Linden grüne* and *Mein junges Leben hat ein Endt*, the imposing *Fantasia crommatica* and takes on Philips's *Pavana dolorosa* and Dowland's *Lachrymae*), here we have tougher fare, including a few toccatas and fantasias (such as the obsessive *Fantasia auf die Manier eines Echo*) that seem more worthy than beguiling, or, like the 11-minute *Fantasia d2*, would possibly sound better on the organ. The most rewarding pieces are the *Pavana hispanica*, the melancholy *Ick voer al over Rhijn* and maybe the *Fantasia re re re sol ut mi fa sol*, with its John Bull-like left-hand gymnastics.

So perhaps Chandos is right – this is primarily one for completists. Vol 2 will serve you better if you want a single disc of Sweelinck to enjoy, or alternatively there is Sébastien Wonne's well-played and more listener-friendly selection (K617, 7/15).

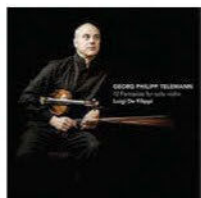
Lindsay Kemp

Telemann

Twelve Sonatas for Solo Violin, TWV40:14-25

Luigi De Filippi *vn*

Challenge Classics © CC72679 (67' • DDD)



Luigi De Filippi is mostly known as a chamber musician and conductor, but in 2013 he recorded a very enjoyable disc of solo

violin sonatas by Telemann. The project clearly agreed with him, because he's now back for more, this time straying into slightly more well-trodden recorded territory with Telemann's 12 Fantasias for solo violin.

Some may be surprised to hear De Filippi's violin tuned at A=425Hz rather than the common Baroque performance standard of 415Hz. He argues that there was no such thing as customary tuning in the 18th century and that some Italian violinists preferred a higher A. Tempting as it is to make smart-alec comments about Telemann himself being German, the tuning works for him; the rich comparative weightiness of the sound he produces on his late-17th-century instrument offsets any supposed reduction in tonal warmth, and close miking and a generous studio acoustic do the rest.

This rich weightiness does mean that the performances don't quite have the lightly supple ease of Andrew Manze's recording for Harmonia Mundi, or indeed quite the colour or whispered *piano* moments. You feel all this in No 1's *Largo*, which is also the only place where rhythmic spontaneity slightly overtakes rhythmic faithfulness, blurring the triple-time lilt in places. However, De Filippi's warmth and muscle create their own pleasures, for instance the passionate bite with which he opens No 12's *Moderato*. His ornamentations, sparingly inserted, are also executed with naturalness.

This doesn't nudge Manze's recording off my own personal pedestal but it's beautifully done, and its slightly more mahoganyed hue and weight make it a welcome alternative to the other recordings worthy of consideration. **Charlotte Gardner**

Selected comparison:

Manze (6/96) (HARM) HMU90 7137

'New Generations'

Bahr Two Preludes **L Floyd** Piano Thoughts, Vol 2 **Gallagher** Ad infinitum **Glass** Piano Etudes

– selection. Dreaming Awake **Lincoln Hanks**

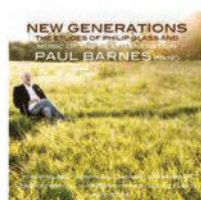
Monstre sacre **Moody** Fioriture **Stanton**

Scenic Route

Paul Barnes *pf*

Orange Mountain Music © 2 OMM0107

(103' • DDD)



Paul Barnes's interest in Philip Glass dates back to the mid-1990s, when he started performing, recording and arranging the composer's piano music. At around the same time Glass was working on Book 1 of

his Piano Etudes – a project that eventually culminated in 2014 in two books comprising 20 studies. While Glass completed the set, Barnes was actively commissioning and performing new works by predominantly (although not exclusively) American composers, and this 'new generation' is represented on the second of this two-disc set.

It makes for an interesting mix of youth and experience. In truth, however, the collection says more about Barnes's own tastes and interests than about any direct influence these composers received from Glass. Some influence can be found in the music of the younger group. Lucas Floyd's *Piano Thoughts*, Vol 2, written last year, consists of five delicately placed piano miniatures, whose understated quality belies an assured technique and confident voice. It would be interesting to hear what he might do with more extended structures. Both Zack Stanton's *Scenic Route* and Jonah Gallagher's *Ad infinitum* weave effective patterns around oscillating figures and patterns, but one suspects that they have drunk more from the wellspring of John Adams than of Glass. As the most 'senior' figure, Ivan Moody stands head and shoulders above the rest with his *Fioriture* – its arch-like melodic tracery expanding and contracting in increasingly involved transformations and elaborations before circling back again to its point of origin.

One suspects that Barnes's personal tastes and preferences also determined the choice of Glass's Etudes on disc 1. The composer is thought to have conceived them in pairs, so while it makes sense for Barnes to combine the brooding, introspective Fifth with the agitated, unpredictable and explosive Sixth, it may have made more sense for him to include No 19 with No 20, rather than No 18, as they both share a common tonality. Although Barnes may not match Maki Namekawa's impervious interpretation when it comes to the profound Etude No 20 (2/15), his rhythmic playing and technical agility shine throughout, especially in the rhapsodic, almost Lisztian 11th and the inscrutable 16th, with its lilting 3+2+2 rhythms. This disc provides further proof of Barnes's ability to communicate new music with flair and passion, lavishing as much care and attention on the music of the 'new generation' as he does on the minimalist master. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

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Lowell Liebermann

Andrew Farach-Colton on a composer who understands the power of melody and believes in music as a communicative art

Lowell Liebermann came of age as a composer in the mid-1970s, during serialism's heyday. At 15, he wrote a craggily expressive piano sonata under the guidance of his teacher, Ruth Schonthal, who had been introducing him to a world of music wide enough to embrace Schoenberg, Hindemith, Stockhausen and Piston. Liebermann's First Piano Sonata was published in 1977 as his Opus 1, and no doubt helped him gain admittance to David Diamond's composition class at the Juilliard School.

Although Diamond was never in the avant-garde, he was at that time purging his music of any traces of consonance, and insisted that Liebermann follow suit. Cello Sonata No 1 (1978) and the First String Quartet (1979) reflect Diamond's modernist influence, although the structure and syntax of these works are otherwise traditional and largely lyrical. In his Second Piano Sonata (1983), however, Liebermann went his own way and incorporated tonal elements. Diamond was not pleased, but Vincent Persichetti told the young composer he thought it was an 'important work'. Liebermann left Diamond's class for Persichetti's.

'Liebermann employs modern techniques alongside materials of the past with a refreshing lack of anxiety' – Stephen Hough

Since then, Liebermann's style has remained remarkably consistent. Tonality remains a conspicuous feature of his musical language, though not in the functional sense of harmonic hierarchies. He has said that he's primarily interested in the implications that the use of tonality can have on form, as well as in its use as a colouristic device, rather like organ registration.

Because of the tonal elements and virtuoso requirements of his music, some have characterised it as neo-Romantic, but Liebermann bristles at that label, saying he'd prefer to describe himself as a neo-Classicist. Clearly, he doesn't mean neo-Classical in the Stravinskian sense, but rather in his preoccupation with motivic concision and formal unity, which is often Haydnesque.

All these various qualities are apparent in the solo piano *Variations on a Theme by Anton Bruckner* (1986) written for Juilliard classmate Erika Nickrenz, who gave the premiere at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina. Nickrenz's father, Scott, who directed the festival's chamber music programme, was impressed with the piece, and immediately commissioned Liebermann to write a Flute Sonata that Paula Robison and Jean-Yves Thibaudet would



Lowell Liebermann: an impeccable craftsman whose music is satisfying to play

play the following season. Soon after, Robison played the work again at a meeting of the National Flute Society, causing something of a sensation; the publisher sold out of copies of the sheet music that same day.

Liebermann, who had never written specifically for the flute before, suddenly found himself in great demand as a composer for the instrument. The sonata was taken up by dozens of flautists, including James Galway, who requested an orchestral version. Liebermann worried that the tension created in the final movement by the technical challenges of the piano part would be lost in an orchestral transcription, so Galway happily commissioned a brand new concerto. In the meantime,

LIEBERMANN FACTS

Born New York City,
February 22, 1961

Breakthrough work Sonata for
Flute and Piano, Op 23 (1987)

Awards and honours Charles
Ives Fellowship (1990) and
Virgil Thomson Award from
the American Academy of
Arts and Letters; Composer-
in-residence with the Dallas
Symphony Orchestra (1999-
2002); American Composers'
Invitational Award, Van Cliburn
Competition (2001)

Liebermann on Liebermann

'I want the listener to feel
that they're entering a world
they can get lost in. A piece of
music should be a journey; it
should feel like you've travelled
somewhere with the material,
that it's gone through some
kind of transformation.
It's not a static object.'

staying power. Liebermann is unequivocal in his belief that music is a communicative art, and that a composer has the responsibility to communicate as clearly as possible, no matter how complex the ideas are.

Liebermann achieves this clarity, in part, by manipulating the various musical elements so that there's rarely, if ever, overload on all fronts. If the textures and rhythms are intricately complex, for instance, there's usually a corresponding sense of harmonic (or vertical) stability or regularity. At times, Liebermann employs what might be described as chaconne-like passages, establishing patterns which may feel unsettled in their harmonic ambiguity, but that find firm footing through repetition. This, of course, provides the opportunity to surprise when the pattern is finally broken.

Beyond the impeccable craftsmanship and pure surface beauty of Liebermann's music is the fact that it's enormously satisfying to play. *Gargoyles* (1989), a set of brief, etude-like piano pieces, is one of his works that's entered the permanent concert repertoire; they collectively evoke memories of the virtuoso miniatures of Liszt, Scriabin, and Prokofiev, while speaking in a voice that is resolutely Liebermann's own. The same can be said for his dazzlingly colourful Second Piano Concerto (1992), written for Stephen Hough and premiered with Mstislav Rostropovich and the National Symphony.

In the booklet-note for his Hyperion recording, Hough analyses the elaborate motivic construction of both the Second Piano Concerto and its somewhat more angular predecessor, then gets to the crux of this composer's art: 'Liebermann freely acknowledges a debt to the past and a conscious growth out of tradition, but this growth involves change and development. Unlike the reactionary who looks backwards at tradition, Liebermann looks forward *with* tradition, confidently employing modern techniques alongside materials of the past with a refreshing lack of self-consciousness or anxiety.'

One can discern this confidence (born of careful craftsmanship) and naturalness (or what I'd describe,

Robison had asked for the Sonata for Flute and Guitar (1988). Then, at the 1992 premiere of the Flute Concerto in St Louis, that orchestra's piccolo player, Jan Gippo, solicited a showpiece for his instrument. Liebermann's Piccolo Concerto appeared in 1996, the same year as the Sonata for Flute and Harp. In 2002, Galway commissioned a trio for flute, cello and piano as a Christmas gift for his flautist wife, Jeanne; a second trio appeared two years later.

Each of these works has its own individual character, yet they share an ethos – dramatic juxtapositions of aching lyricism and virtuoso extravagance wedded to clear delineation between melody and accompaniment – that helps to explain their widespread appeal and

simply, as revelling in beauty) in so many of Liebermann's best pieces, such as the tightly knit Piano Quintet (1990), with its intimately radiant slow movement; the tintinnabular exuberance of the Sonata for Two Pianos (2012); or the expansive yet inexorable cinematic sweep of the Concerto for Orchestra (2002) – one of the composer's own favourites among his works.

The Concerto, composed originally for Grant Llewellyn and the Toledo Symphony, demonstrates Liebermann's mastery of the long form as well as his innate sense of theatricality. His two operas – a setting of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1995) commissioned by the Opéra de Monte-Carlo, and *Miss Lonelyhearts* (2005), written to celebrate the Juilliard centenary – have yet to be recorded, but both reveal Liebermann's ease in establishing and sustaining dramatic tension. Then, too, there is a wide range of songs, from unsettlingly confidential settings of poems by Raymond Carver (2002) to the flamboyant expressionism of the *Struwwelpeterlieder* (1996).

His most recent work is *Frankenstein*, commissioned by Liam Scarlett and the Royal Opera House Ballet, and scheduled to premiere in London on May 4 – a significant addition to a catalogue that already numbers well over 125 compositions. Liebermann, who balances writing and teaching (he currently heads the composition department at the Mannes School of Music at the New School in New York City), says that a full-length ballet score is even more daunting to write than an opera, as there's no text to carry one along. It is, in essence, a two-and-a-half-hour-long symphony.

Yet, on paper, at least, *Frankenstein* seems to play directly to this composer's strengths, given his occasional interest in macabre subjects (*Gargoyles*, *Struwwelpeterlieder* and *Dorian Gray*) as well as what Hough has called Liebermann's lack of fear in 'boldly allowing melodies to soar'. Scarlett – who used Liebermann's First Piano Concerto as the music for his ballet *Viscera* – maintains that, despite its grotesquerie, Mary Shelley's gothic novel is ultimately about love. And what could inspire a melody to soar higher? **G**

THE BEST LIEBERMANN RECORDINGS

Three diverse routes into Liebermann's sound world

**Piano Concertos Nos 1 & 2**

Stephen Hough *pf* BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra /
Lowell Liebermann
Hyperion (9/97)

Stunningly played and vividly recorded, this recording is an ideal place to introduce oneself to Liebermann's innovative traditionalism.

**Flute Concerto. Piccolo Concerto, etc**

James Galway *fl/picc* Hyun-Sun Na *hp*
London Mozart Players / Lowell Liebermann
RCA Red Seal (2/99)

Three memorably lyrical, richly atmospheric concertos that have now become repertoire staples, played here by one of the composer's most ardent champions.

**Concerto for Orchestra. Nocturne. Revelry, etc**

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Grant Llewellyn
Albany

Liebermann calls the Concerto for Orchestra his 'best and favourite' work. The BBC Symphony players revel in the music's awesome technical challenges.

Vocal



Tim Ashley listens to Vol 4 of Hyperion's survey of Liszt's songs:

'The late songs frequently deal with memory, mortality and abandonment, and the disc's pervasive mood is elegiac' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 73**



Alexandra Coghlan explores a new album from Simone Kermes:

'It's a charming way of reinventing the oldest theme in the book, and Kermes's repertoire choices are wide-ranging' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**

JS Bach

'Secular Cantatas, Vol 6'

Cantata No 198, Lass, Fürstin, lass noch einen Strahl (Trauer Ode). Schlege doch, gewünschte Stunde, BWV53. Tilge, Höchster, meine Sünden, BWV1083

Joanne Lunn, Carolyn Sampson *sops* Robin Blaze *counterten* Gerd Türk *ten* Dominik Wörner *bass*

Bach Collegium Japan / Masaaki Suzuki
BIS (P) BIS2181 (79' • DDD/DSD • T/I)



It has been a while since a new account of the *Trauer Ode* appeared in its original

form – as opposed to reconstructions for the lost music for Prince Leopold of Cöthen's funeral and the *St Mark Passion*. Perhaps it is because of the work's indeterminate place in Bach's vocal canon that Masaaki Suzuki is recording it at the end of his cantata marathon, alongside the Lutheran Masses and other miscellany – including here the decreasingly rare *Tilge, Höchster* after Pergolesi's *Stabat mater*.

Unlike the four 'parody Masses', the exquisite *Trauer Ode* draws on no extant material for the celebrated Funeral of the much-loved Princess of Saxony, Christianne Eberhardine – a Protestant heroine in the face of a philandering husband who accumulated Catholic territories with shameless strategic acumen. The service on October 17, 1727, is well documented and, the event being 'political' in both nature and personnel, Bach was keen to impress. Suzuki clearly recognises this with a ringing endorsement of Bach's meticulous canvas of bittersweet emotions where sacred sorrow is inflected by an unusually secular view on 'the art of dying'.

Too often the sensuality of Bach's 'soft' scoring – lutes, flutes, oboes d'amore, violas da gamba, those timeless instruments of mourning – is under-projected and therefore the quest to imbue Johann Christoph Gottsched's vivid text with real fragrance is compromised. Bach Collegium Japan produce a delectable vision in quasi-

'Passion' clothes (the *St Matthew* had received its first performance only six months earlier), the choruses captivatingly detailed, luminous and with just enough *galant* accentuation in the framing movements to mark out the composer's purview of prevailing taste.

Each of the soloists responds perceptively to the discrete point of their contributions. Both Joanne Lunn and Robin Blaze produce a gloriously bell-like radiance, even if, in the former's aria, the gambas are rather earth-bound. Most of all, Suzuki delivers a captivating narrative of sadness leading seamlessly and reassuringly to idealism. This is a recording that in certain respects bucks the trend, especially in its strongly rooted reading of the wonderful tenor aria on the words 'The sapphire house of eternity' (often deliberately ethereal) and the slightly aloof final chorus. More nostalgia is found with Jürgen Jürgens and greater intimacy with Philippe Pierlot's Ricercar Consort, but this recording acts as a powerful reminder of the extraordinary depths of beauty to be found in this work.

David Vickers wrote in March about *Tilge* under Damien Guillon in, clearly, a highly agreeable and refined performance (Glossa). Even if the adaptation of Psalm 51 in German requires the odd double-take from the listener, one cannot but find solace and satisfaction in the assuaging dialogues of Carolyn Sampson and Robin Blaze for Suzuki. As an interlude, the misattributed BWV53 is also deeply touching and, like everything on this disc, richly coloured and treasured by exceptional performers.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

BWV198 – selected comparisons:

Conc Amsterdam, Jürgens

(11/67^R, 10/94) (WARN) 2564 64763-2

Ricercar Consort, Pierlot (9/07) (MIRA) MIR030

JS Bach

St John Passion, BWV245

Julian Prégardien *ten* Evangelist Tareq Nazmi *bass*

Christus Christina Landshamer *sop* Ulrike Malotta

contr Tilman Lichdi *ten* Krešimir Stražanac *bass*

Bavarian Radio Chorus; Concerto Köln / Peter Dijkstra

BR-Klassik (B) 900909 (106' + 72 • DDD • T/I)

Recorded live at the Herkulessaal, Munich, March 4-7, 2015. Disc 3 contains an introduction to the St John Passion (in German)



The Bavarian Radio Chorus under Peter Dijkstra add the *St John Passion* to

their discography of major Baroque oratorios. The edition used is the standard modern conflation of Bach's original 1724 score, the abandoned 1739 revision of the first part and a few elements from the final 1749 version. This means there are no surprises regarding text, and the live recording, taken from a series of concerts at Munich's Herkulessaal, is an accomplished and satisfying experience.

From the outset of 'Herr, unser Herrscher', the driving bass-lines, turbulently swirling strings, wailing oboes and crisp harpsichord continuo of Concerto Köln establish this as an emotionally engaging performance. The Bavarian Radio Chorus's disciplined precision in vigorous fugues and vividly characterised *turba* choruses will appeal to those who like some old-fashioned gutsiness and broad sonorities aligned to period-instrument textures directed with a sure hand. For example, the rustling orchestral details and flexible choral declamation in 'Lasset uns den nicht zerteilen' are delineated astutely.

Julian Prégardien's authoritative Evangelist drips with integrity and sensitivity as each stage of the Passion demands. His honeyed delivery of Peter's bitter weeping is breathtaking, and the rending of the Temple has booming ominousness; on both occasions it seems a bit anticlimactic when another tenor soloist suddenly pops up to sing the ensuing movement, although Tilman Lichdi does a creditable job throughout ('Erwäge' has Concerto Köln's expertly balanced solo strings on compelling form).



Scherzi Musicali record Bertali's oratorio *La Maddalena* at the Provinciaal Museum Begijnhofkerk in Sint-Truiden, Belgium

Tareq Nazmi's resonant bass is a bolder Christ than one often hears. Christina Landshamer's lithe singing in 'Ich folge dir gleichfalls' is an ideal match for the warm texture of two unison flutes with firmly bowed string basses and archlute continuo. Dijkstra's use of contrafagotto (not quite as *pianissimo* as usual), gently rolling broken chords from the archlute and muted violins in 'Betrachte, meine Seel' creates an enthralling texture in support of Krešimir Stražanac's compassionate singing. The tender partnership between mezzo-soprano Ulrike Malotta and Jan Freiheit's viola da gamba obbligato in 'Es ist vollbracht' is contrasted with brightly valorous violins in the fast section. Those who admire streamlined approaches – whether big or small – might find that Dijkstra overcooks the recipe now and then, for example with deliberately sculpted rubato in the elegantly moulded chorales, but there is nothing perfunctory about the tangible sense of occasion captured in this reading.

David Vickers

Bertali

La Maddalena

Scherzi Musicali / Nicholas Achten
Ricercar © RIC367 (67' • DDD • T/t)



Apart from the well-known *Ciacconna* and the *Lamento della Regina d'Inghilterra*

recorded by Anne Sofie Von Otter some years ago (Archiv, 3/99), the music of Antonio Bertali is virtually unknown. His oratorio *La Maddalena* is structured in three parts, with its opening section cast as an allegorical dialogue between Pentimento and Amor verso Dio (sung by bass and tenor, the former here richly resonant), underpinned by a consort of six viols and continuo. If the tone here is overwhelmingly dark, the second part, which introduces the two women closest to Jesus, the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, introduces a more optimistic flavour with occasional episodes of major tonality and triple dance rhythms. Luciana Mancini's Maria is pleasantly bright in the upper register, firm and rounded in the middle range, and there is some discreetly applied ornamentation; the two voices are nicely matched and blend well.

It is only with the third and final part that the full cast of six characters appears, fuller textures in places contrasting with

the largely arioso style of so much of the writing. Continuing the theme of the penitent Magdalene, Bertali's piece is framed by the occasional music for Andreini's play *La Maddalena* given in Mantua in 1617, the major contribution being by Claudio Monteverdi. Concluding the sequence is Domenico Mazzochi's 'Lagrima amare', a setting of a sonnet depicting the lamentation of Mary Magdalene at the foot of the Cross. Here the piece has been prefaced by an introduction for cornett, which explores the full sonic range of the instrument with considerable delicacy.

The real weight, though, falls on the soprano role, which gathers dramatic pace as the piece moves forwards, alternating melodic passages with recitative. Something of an emotional climax is reached with a hailstorm of passagework in the third section, brilliantly executed by Deborah Cachet, before the music subsides into reflective melancholy. **Iain Fenlon**

Britten

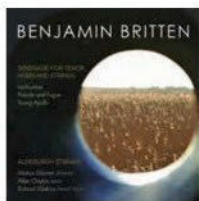
Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings, Op 31^a.
Lachrymae, Op 48a^b. Prelude and Fugue, Op 29.
Young Apollo, Op 16^c

^aAllan Clayton *ten* ^bRichard Watkins *hn*

^bMáté Szűcs *va* ^cLorenzo Soullès *pf*

Aldeburgh Strings / Markus Däunert

Linn © CKD478 (55' • DDD • T)



Founded in 2010, Aldeburgh Strings bring together advanced students for intensive periods of study. Their tutors are leading musicians from international orchestras, like Markus Däunert, a founder member of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and director for this programme, which is derived from projects undertaken for the Britten centenary in 2013. The concentration achieved on the course is evident from the standard of playing here. 'There is no mobile phone signal at Snape,' says Däunert, 'so we can focus on the music.'

In Britten's buoyant *Young Apollo* Aldeburgh Strings field a greater weight and range of colour than Rattle's CBSO, making the work sound more expressive and substantial, and Lorenzo Soulès is a dexterous solo pianist. Angst permeates the string clusters of *Lachrymae* early on, too (how powerfully the bass notes resound in Snape Maltings' generous acoustic) and Máté Szűcs, first principal viola of the Berlin Philharmonic, makes an insightful soloist. In this resonant hall the Prelude and Fugue sounds bigger in forces than it really is – almost symphonic in scale, like one of Barshai's arrangements for chamber orchestra of the Shostakovich string quartets. All are performances to be recommended.

The competition in the *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* is more intense. As in his recent recording of the Nocturne, part of Aurora Orchestra's 'Insomnia' programme (Warner, 9/15), Allan Clayton is the epitome of the English tenor, agile in the Ben Jonson setting, floating with an ethereal sense of menace through the Scottish 'This ae nighte'. The poetry is sung with clarity and perception, the 'dark, secret love' in the Blake becoming an inner thought confided to the microphone. What I miss is the consistent depth of tone that would carry with weight and stature in the concert hall. Richard Watkins is commanding as the horn soloist and Aldeburgh Strings are again a vivid presence. At under an hour there was room for more. This disc, though, should build awareness of the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme's work. **Richard Fairman**
Young Apollo – selected comparison:
Donoboe, CBSO, Rattle (1/83*) (EMI/WARN) 242743-2

'Handel at Vauxhall, Vol 1'

Arne Colin and Phoebe **Handel** *Acis and Galatea*, HWV49 – Sinfonia; *Ye verdant plains...*

Hush, ye pretty warbling choir!. The Advice. L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato, HWV55 – As steals the morn upon the night. The Melancholy Nymph, HWV228 No 19. Organ Concerto, Op 4 No 2 HWV290. Saul, HWV53 – Dead March **Hebden** Concerto No 1 **Daniel Moul** *org*
London Early Opera / Bridget Cunningham
Signum © SIGCD428 (48' • DDD • T/t)



There is not much cast-iron proof about the concert programmes

performed at Vauxhall Gardens on any given night during the 1730s, although evidence about such stuff from later on in the 18th century survives. None of the music by Handel included here was written for the pleasure gardens; the only piece he definitely composed for the venue is a little hornpipe written in 1740 (which I expect will be included on a future volume), so the free mixture of orchestral and sung items is a perfectly sensible and enjoyable approach to imagining what a typical night at Vauxhall might have sounded like.

There is a charming ebb and flow to this hypothetical entertainment: the playful Sinfonia from *Acis and Galatea* leads straight into a little organ improvisation; then the Organ Concerto in B flat (Op 4 No 2), played sweetly on a little chamber organ by Daniel Moul, leads into Galatea's 'Hush, ye pretty warbling choir' – an air certainly sung at Vauxhall on some occasions (a chirruping bird whistle applied at random is a little bit distracting from Kirsty Hopkins's pretty singing). Burney claims that Arne's pastoral duet *Colin and Phoebe* (1745) was encored every night at Vauxhall for three months, and its lilting performance by Eleanor Dennis and Greg Tassell functions here as a counterpart to Handel's 'As steals the morn' (which on this occasion feels a bit perfunctory).

In the midst of this there is a sweet Corellian concerto for strings by John Hebden (a cellist in the Vauxhall band), a couple of little songs attributed to Handel and a solemn performance of the Dead March from *Saul*; this was a favourite piece of Vauxhall's proprietor Jonathan Tyers, who installed Roubiliac's marble statue of the composer (now in the V&A) next to the orchestra stand in May 1738, and two years later subscribed to several sets of the Op 6 Concerti grossi – a massive clue about which concertos were played at Vauxhall that Cunningham might want to pursue in future volumes of the series.

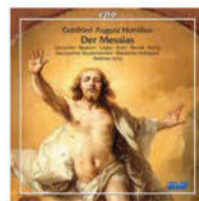
David Vickers**Homilius**

Der Messias

Meike Leluschko, Friederike Beykirch *sops***Annekathrin Laabs** *mez* **Patrick Grahl** *ten***Tobias Berndt, Sebastian Wartig** *basses***Saxon Vocal Ensemble; Batzdorf Hofkapelle / Matthias Jung**

CPO © ② CPO777 947-2 (96' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Annenkirche, Dresden, June 5, 2014



The Homilius revival marches on. Following a clutch of recordings

from Carus, CPO gets in on the act with the Dresden composer's oratorio *Der Messias*, which was first performed at the Frauenkirche on Good Friday 1776. Although the libretto bears no relation to Charles Jennens's for Handel, the work's composition coincided with the popularisation of Handel's score in German-speaking lands, and the two are of nearly identical length.

Homilius was especially highly esteemed as a church composer, and it is easy to hear why. His feeling for melody is balanced (or perhaps even exceeded) by a flair for dramatic touches, for which the libretto furnishes ample opportunity. The choral interventions are especially remarkable, though there is plenty of fine music among the arias. In general, the latter do not include the elaborate obbligato instrumental parts familiar from more famous scores of the previous generation (or the sacred works of CPE or WF Bach, for that matter); that said, the meditation on 'Es ist vollbracht', entrusted to both sopranos, hints at a more modern approach to scoring, in which the entire orchestra supports the soloists. As in the more successful volumes from the Carus series, there is again the sense of a familiar idiom being handled in a subtly unfamiliar way.

The performance does the work full justice. It would be invidious to single out any particular soloist, for it is the collective endeavour, drawing attention only to the quality of the music, that is most striking. In this they are ably supported by the ensemble and choir. For a composer whose discography is still comparatively modest, Homilius has been remarkably well served.

Fabrice Fitch**Leifs**

'Complete Songs'

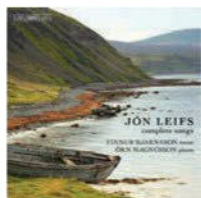
Three Verses from Hávamál, Op 4. Three Icelandic Hymns, Op 12a. Two Songs – Op 14a; Op 18a. Love Verses from the Edda, Op 18b. Two

③



London Early Opera and Bridget Cunningham recreate Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens at Saint Jude-on-the-Hill, Hampstead Garden Suburb

Icelandic Folksongs, Op 19*b*. Three Songs, Op 23. Three Songs from Icelandic Sagas, Op 24. Songs from the Saga Symphony, Op 25. Memory-Land, Op 27 No 3. Old Scaldic Verses from Iceland, Op 31. Torrek, Op 33*a*. Memorial Songs on the Death of Jónas Hallgrímsson, Op 45. Stattu steinhús (Stand, house of stone), Op 47*a*. **Finnur Bjarnason** *ten* **Örn Magnússon** *pf*
BIS © BIS2170 (80' • DDD • T/t)
From Smekkleysa SMK20



Jón Leifs wrote songs throughout his career, works which 'give unusually clear

insights into the composer', according to Árni Heimir Ingólfsson's booklet-notes, and which were shaped by the composer's interest in Icelandic literature and folksong pretty much from the start.

Despite that breadth, Leifs has a consistent *modus operandi*. The voice is most often enveloped by a rich piano sound that cascades steadily through huge tectonic chords like flowing lava. Those chords are often shape-shifting, modal entities subjected to sudden unprepared modulations. Sometimes the progression of chords explodes into something more

motoric or recedes into something more reflective. Sometimes, as in the first of the Two Songs, Op 18*a*, and the second of the *Love Verses from the Edda*, Op 18*b*, the piano's steamroller underlay reaches a level of crushing intensity that flings the voice into soaring lyricism. Almost always, the vocal progression is shaped by the distinctive metre of the Icelandic verse (hymns, Romantic poetry and excerpts from the sagas).

This entire collection is dark, thrilling and terrifying. Leifs has a direct way with melody, which despite its irregularities often has a pleasing, Reger-like geometry. His short, heroic 'character sketches' for the *Saga Symphony* are distinctive even within the consistency of approach described above. Perhaps the 'Dance of the Spectres' from Three Songs, Op 23, is a little hackneyed in its pianistic description of the macabre; elsewhere Leif's freshness and individuality is present from his lullabies and simple hymn settings to the thrusting grief of a piece such as 'Torrek', a response to the drowning of his daughter Líf off the coast of Sweden.

At his best, Finnur Bjarnason is magnificent. He has the breakaway lyricism of a *verismo* character and the

in-your-ear intimacy of a Lieder singer. He offers pride, anger, isolation, hesitance, doubt and despair across a huge volume range; the voice has a consistently free, open sound despite its grain and useful (in this repertoire) edge. Örn Magnússon, strident at the piano, pushes Bjarnason to further and further despair in these 2000/01 recordings initially made for Smekkleysa. Anyone who has been fascinated or troubled by the stark black rock on which Iceland is built – literally and literarily – should find plenty to reflect on here.

Andrew Mellor

Liszt

'The Complete Songs, Vol 4'

Blume und Duft, S324 (second version). Des Tages laute Stimmen schweigen, S337. Einst, S332. Gebet, S331. Ich scheide, S319 (second version). Il m'aimait tant!, S271. Lasst mich ruhen, S317. Die Loreley, S273 (second version). Mignons Lied, S275 (second version). Sei still, S330. Die tote Nachtigall, S291 (second version). Verlassen, S336. Was Liebe sei, S288 (three settings). Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen ass, S297 (first setting, second version). Wieder möcht' ich dir begeben, S322

Sasha Cooke *mez* **Julius Drake** *pf*
Hyperion © CDA68117 (61' • DDD • T/t)



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COLIN MATTHEWS: VIOLIN CONCERTO



To celebrate Colin's 70th Birthday we release this new album featuring a star-studded line-up of artists, including conductors **Riccardo Chailly**, **Oliver Knussen**, **Rumon Gamba**, and soloists **Leila Josefowicz** (violin) and **Anssi Karttunen** (cello).

MARK SIMPSON: NIGHT MUSIC



This first portrait album of the work of 27-year-old composer Mark Simpson features a collection of chamber music pieces recorded by the musicians and ensembles for whom they were originally written, including **Mercury Quartet**, **Guy Johnston** (cello), **Nicholas Daniel** (oboe) and **Mark Simpson** (clarinet).

MICHAEL FINNISSY

Michael also celebrates his 70th this year. This new release from **Huddersfield Contemporary Records** features pianist **Philip Thomas** performing *Beat Generation Ballads* and *First Political Agenda*.

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SIGCD446



DEO | Jonathan Harvey
The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge
Edward Picton-Turbervill organ
Andrew Nethsingha conductor

The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge launch a new series of recordings, beginning with a disc that celebrates the close connections between the choir and British composer Jonathan Harvey (1939-2012), in a disc of works for choir and organ. Works include *Toccata for Organ and Tape*, *I Love the Lord*, *Missa Brevis* and his final work with the choir *The Annunciation*.

SIGCD448



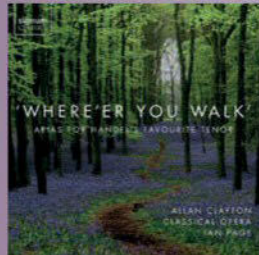
Bruce: Gumboots
Johannes Brahms Clarinet Quintet
Julian Bliss clarinet
Carducci Quartet

SIGCD455



Poulenc: Works for Piano Solo and Duo
Lucille Chung piano
feat. Alessio Bax piano

SIGCD457



'Where'er You Walk'
Arias for Handel's Favourite Tenor
Allan Clayton tenor
Classical Opera
Ian Page conductor

SIGCD443



Songs to the Moon
Brahms | Fauré
Saint-Saëns | Schumann
Myrthen Ensemble
Mary Bevan | Clara Mouriz
Allan Clayton | Marcus Farnsworth
Joseph Middleton piano

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Distributed in the UK by **harmonia mundi**





Over half the songs in Vol 4 of Julian Drake's Liszt series date from 1860 to 1880, a period

that saw the end of Liszt's major phase of Lieder composition and his increasingly sporadic return to the genre in subsequent years. His late songs frequently deal with memory, mortality and abandonment, and the disc's pervasive mood is elegiac, shot through with retrospective glances to the early warmth and wit of songs such as 'Il m'aimait tant!' (1842), as well as to the big Goethe settings of the mid-1850s in the second versions of both 'Die Loreley' and 'Mignons Lied'. It's a difficult programme, and one to which the silvery-voiced American mezzo Sasha Cooke is variably suited. For all its considerable strengths, the disc doesn't have quite the same impact as its predecessors.

The later songs, echoing the stripped-back idiom of Liszt's late piano works, hover in territory between melody and recitative, their often hushed vocal lines barely supported by the sparest of accompaniments. Cooke is very much alert to their introversion and sadness. The way she encompasses small gradations in volume over a relatively narrow dynamic range impresses, while Drake makes every chord and phrase shiver with meaning. The close recording, however, sometimes catches a pulse in Cooke's tone, particularly noticeable in the opening 'Des Tages laute Stimmen schweigen'. Though her diction is for the most part admirably clear, the words here could be a bit more pointed, too.

In some ways, she seems more comfortable in the earlier songs and dramatic narratives. The humour and regret of 'Il m'aimait tant!' is beautifully judged. The three versions of 'Was Liebe sei', turning less suggestive and more wistful as Liszt aged, are nicely differentiated: Cooke's louche way with the end of the first is delightful. 'Die Loreley' pushes her at both ends of her range, particularly at the top where the sound, under pressure, can turn metallic. But the narrative is cleanly focused, the Loreley's allure and the boatman's panic both keenly felt. Best of all, perhaps, is 'Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen ass' (1845), which simmers and rears with angry resentment before subsiding into despair.

Drake's commitment to this repertory is never in doubt, and, as always, he opens minds and ears to much that we haven't heard before. **Tim Ashley**

Lotti

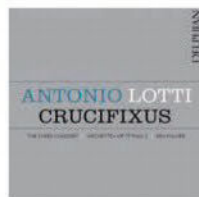
'Crucifixus'

Credo. Dixit Dominus. Miserere.

Missa Sancti Christophori

The Syred Consort; Orchestra of St Paul's / Ben Palmer

Delphian © DCD34182 (79) • DDD • T/t



Just as there's more to Allegri than the *Miserere*, so with Antonio Lotti. The

ubiquitous 'Crucifixus' (from the *Missa Sancti Christophori*) is presented here among a remarkable range of the Venetian's mosaic of richly coloured Mass and psalm settings given by The Syred Consort and Orchestra of St Paul's in their debut recording for Delphian. As a label never to shirk an ambitious choral project (we still bless them for that revelatory Strauss *Deutsche Motette* under the late David Trendell – 7/13), distinctiveness of language is clearly a virtue and Lotti a worthy figure in his unique repository of eclectic mid- to late-Baroque conceits.

Each of these offerings suggests a director in Ben Palmer who has a firm grip on his material: rhythms are propelled with purpose and vitality (as evident in the *Dixit Dominus*), and there's an unyielding quest to uncover the imagery and sensibility of Lotti's almost cinematic perspectives with graphic immediacy. Witness the repetitive and spiky homophonic accompaniment to 'I was shapen in wickedness' in the *Miserere* in C minor or the surprising theatricality of the 'Et incarnatus' in the Mass.

If there is a slight drawback in Lotti's world, it's the tendency to deliver concentrated flavours without the grammatical palate-cleansing relief that his friend Vivaldi offered down the canal. The strength of these performances lies largely in an organic sense of what each work can effectively impart, again strongly enabled by Palmer's unequivocal vision. The full ensemble in rhetorical mode is generally more successful than the smaller-scale solos, which can sound vocally prosaic and where, rather too plenteously, blend and intonation have not been adequately repaired.

There's still a good deal to enjoy here in these largely premiere recordings. The *Sancti Christophori* Mass is full of wonderfully fresh ideas and it is here that the ensemble, peccadilloes aside, most persuasively demonstrate their admirable commitment and feel for Lotti's kaleidoscopic nuancing, not to mention a superior level of performance in this work.

When the 'Crucifixus' is heard embedded within the mass's *Credo*, it's easier than ever to see how Lotti's reputation is based on its three minutes of magic, and yet Ben Palmer has irrevocably identified a fine craftsman who is rather more than a 'one-piece wonder' – which Allegri may well remain. **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**

Pasquini

La sete di Christo

Francesca Aspromonte *sop* **Luca Cervoni,**

Francisco Fernández-Rueda *tenor* **Mauro Borgioni**

bar **Concerto Romano / Alessandro Quarta**

Christophorus © CHR77398 (67) • DDD • T/t



Bernardo Pasquini (1637-1710) was Rome's leading harpsichordist and

organist at about the same time as Corelli and Alessandro Scarlatti. Indeed, all three became official members of the Arcadian Academy on April 26, 1706. His Passion oratorio *La sete di Christo* (Modena, 1689) is a philosophical discussion between the Virgin Mary, St John the Evangelist, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus as they are witnesses at the Crucifixion and contemplate the deeper significance of the fifth of Christ's seven last words ('I thirst').

The sinfonias introducing both parts of the oratorio locate Pasquini's musical aesthetic somewhere between Stradella and Corelli; in particular, the *Largo* at the beginning of Part 2 is played plangently by Concerto Romano's small group of single strings. The action (such as it is) commences with a succession of mournful and contemplative musical passages for the Virgin Mary, responded to by madrigalian trios from the lower voices – all components are sung with dignified sensitivity for musical shaping and text.

Francesca Aspromonte's fresh-voiced Virgin sings deliciously in counterpoint to succinct string ritornellos in music that ebbs and flows gracefully and emotively, and she concludes the oratorio with a deeply affecting musical evocation of the Pietà. Luca Cervoni's experience singing in small groups (such as Concerto Italiano) informs his gently beseeching and beautifully enunciated performance of Giuseppe d'Arimatea's laments. Francisco Fernández-Rueda probably has a beefier tenor in normal everyday life than is given free rein in his ardent performance as San Giovanni: 'Tutto piaghe' is an eloquent description of unbridled grief wrapped up in descending chromatic gestures and doleful string-writing, whereas 'Trema

il suolo' is a dynamic illustration of the simile text's reference to an earthquake. Bass Mauro Borgioni sings Nicodemus with a smoky urgency.

Alessandro Quarta's direction nurtures the pious discourse discreetly – other than some rare instances of loudly accompanied recitatives, one seldom senses any obstructive micro-management. **David Vickers**

Schnittke

Penitential Psalms. Three Sacred Hymns

RIAS Chamber Choir / Hans-Christoph Rademann
 Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2225 (55' • DDD • T/t)



Composed in 1988 to celebrate the millennium of Russia's conversion

to Christianity, Schnittke's *Penitential Psalms* overlap stylistically and conceptually with the magnificent Concerto for Chorus of three years earlier. The Psalms are based on anonymous 16th-century texts and set in a severe yet intermittently luminous style, very much in the line of Bortnyansky, Rachmaninov and other masters of the Russian sacred *a cappella* tradition. However, they are generally a degree or two more austere than the concerto, with fewer opportunities for ecstatic outpouring, and their demands on intonation and colouristic range are correspondingly even more intense.

The Berlin-based RIAS Chamber Choir cope admirably with all this and with the Russian texts – far more fluently, it has to be said, than do the Danish National Radio Choir in the premiere recording. Their director, Hans-Christoph Rademann, has returned to the manuscript and as a result reversed many of the editorial interventions in the published score. However, far ahead of both ensembles are the Swedish Radio Choir, whose flexibility, subtlety and sheer tonal heft are both thrilling and profoundly moving, not to mention being a good deal more atmospherically – yet by no means over-glamorously – recorded.

For anyone who can afford both discs, the three *Sacred Hymns* on the new issue, composed in 1983 following the repeated implorings of choral conductor Valery Polyansky, are a small but not unattractive bonus. In addition, the Harmonia Mundi booklet essay is better informed and less gushy than ECM's. Still, it is the ECM disc that I will return to for listening pleasure.

David Fanning

Penitential Psalms – comparative versions:

Danish Nat Rad Ch, Parkman (2/97) (CHAN) CHAN9480
Swedish Radio Choir, Kaljuste (5/99) (ECM) 453 513-2

Sørensen

'Snowbells – Works for Choir'

Sneeklokken (The Snowbell). Sneeklokken (Snowbells), Gråfødt (Greyborn). Livet og døden (Life and death). Three Motets. Lacrimosa. 'og solen går ned' ('and the sun sets'). Benedictus. Havet står så blankt og stille (The sea stands so still and shining)

Danish National Vocal Ensemble / Paul Hillier
 Dacapo © 6 220629 (61' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



This is proving some year for Bent Sørensen. His remarkable

new Triple Concerto was premiered by Trio Con Brio and the Danish National Symphony Orchestra in January and this Dacapo release comes hot on the heels of its recording of his extraordinary 'concerto for orchestra, choir, actors and audience' *Sounds Like You*. Sørensen doesn't identify himself as a 'choral' composer even though he's best known outside Denmark for his complementary movements to Ockeghem's unfinished Requiem (7/12). But he's at work on a full Passion setting, and these pieces from 1985–2014 (some of which may turn up in said Passion) present an embracing overview of his distinctive way with unaccompanied voices.

It is, to my mind, a particularly fruitful medium for Sørensen, the thinking person's neo-Romantic. Rarely does he ask voices to do anything other than sing long notes or shapely phrases (strangely refreshing these days). A constant tension pulls his music between the magnetic poles of warm, Romantic tonality and rich, Schoenbergian atonality with Renaissance polyphony often forming a structural underlay. Much of the music on this disc feels soaked in tears, with the occasional shot of searing Baltic pain. Sørensen's hallmarks of fragmentation and decay are in evidence, as is his arm's-length love for voices singing a simple, well-harmonised hymn or song (parts of 'og solen går ned' could be a Langgaard motet with the ink smudged).

We begin, in fact, with the lone voice of Adam Riis in Sørensen's *The Snowbell*, a 'composed' folksong whose tune (and now divided verses) weaves its way in and out of the following eight-movement *Snowbells*, Sørensen deploying his favourite method of making the theme appear as if drifting past a closed window, just out of reach. The Three Motets are Sørensen classics but are here blessed with the blend, heft and continental glow of one of Europe's most nuanced small-scale radio choirs. The

Lacrimosa and *Benedictus* appeared on Ars Nova's recording of the Sørensen/Ockeghem Requiem and both have a touch more tidal undertow and stillness from the DR Vocal Ensemble.

We end, appropriately enough, with Sørensen's straight, 'chaste' (to borrow annotator Trine Boje Mortensen's description) and wholly tonal setting of Hans Christian Andersen's *The sea stands so still and shining*. Sometimes you notice the lower voices of the ensemble very occasionally singing off the note when Sørensen's textures are at their most stepwise and homophonic, and sometimes the blend of the female voices curdles when they climb up high. Apart from that, all-round excellence and a disc that's unusually moving in one sitting – a perfect preface to the silence Sørensen seems so acutely aware of and, sometimes, hesitant to fill.

Andrew Mellor

Tallis

Lamentations of Jeremiah – I; II. Nine Psalm Tunes – No 7, Why brag'st in malice high; No 9, Come Holy Ghost, 'Ordinal'. Short Service, 'Dorian'. Dum transisset Sabbatum. In pace, in idipsum. Not every one that saith unto me. Salvator mundi I. Sancte Deus. Solemnis urgebat dies, 'Iam Christus astra ascenderat'. Te Deum 'for meanes'

The Cardinal's Musick / Andrew Carwood
 Hyperion © CDA68121 (73' • DDD • T/t)



This final volume of Tallis from The Cardinal's Musicke continues the

fine form of its predecessors. Their interpretation of the English-texted works shows how effective these contrapuntally unassuming settings can be when sung with conviction. This is true of the *Dorian* Short Service and especially the two psalm tunes, here divested of sanctimonious overtones. Like the *Dorian* Short Service, the *Te Deum* is a compact setting, a masterclass in dispatching a longish text with maximum rhetorical efficiency. Only in the final invocation does Tallis allow himself an extended point of imitation, bringing the work to a robust conclusion. The relatively dry acoustic of the Fitzalan Chapel, Arundel Castle, seems to encourage this approach.

The disc's main attraction, however, is the famous pair of *Lamentations*, which boasts a substantial discography. Carwood opts for a couple of (male) voices to a part, and for those who find single voices offer



More than a one-piece wonder? Ben Palmer and The Syred Consort persent a case for Lotti at All Hallows', Gospel Oak (review on page 75)

an insufficiently monumental sonority, these readings may well top the list of possible alternatives. For myself, a touch more of the hard-nosed approach just mentioned in connection with the English-texted settings (or The Cardinal's pugnacious Byrd Masses, for example) would not have gone amiss. The marked change of tempo before the concluding 'Jerusalem' injunction of each setting is an enshrined performance habit that can be challenged (as the one-to-a-part reading from the Taverner Consort demonstrates) and arguably deserves to be. That the ensemble play things far safer in the Latin-texted pieces than in the vernacular ones doesn't however detract from a splendid series, the most comprehensive survey of Tallis since the Chapelle du Roi's (Signum) and consistently the more accomplished.

Fabrice Fitch

'Conversations avec Dieu'

Bruhns Hemmt eure Tränenflut

Hammerschmidt Ach Gott, warum hast du mein vergessen?. Erbarm dich mein, o Herre Gott. Ergo sit nulla ratio salutis. Herr, wie lange willst du mein so gar vergessen. Inter brachia salvatoris mei. Première pavane a 5
Monteverdi Sinfonia **Rosenmüller** Sinfonia XI
Scheidemann Erbarm dich mein, o Herre

Gott. Praeludium **Scheidt** Ist nicht Ephraim mein teurer Sohn?. Variations on 'Warum betrübst du dich, mein Herz?' **Telemann** Cantata, 'Ach, Herr, straf mich nicht in deinem Zorn', TWV7:3

Le Concert Etranger / Itay Jedlin

Ambonay © AMYO45 (77' • DDD • T/t)



The title of this recording, 'Conversations with God', takes its cue

from a 1645 publication by Andreas Hammerschmidt, a representative of the generation of German composers who grew up after Schütz, several of whom are represented on this disc. He was plainly an accomplished musician, conversant with the *a cappella* church style, the newer Italian solo vocal idiom and the consort music of England. All of these may be heard here but Hammerschmidt's invention is far from consistent in the short works selected. His younger contemporary Nicolaus Bruhns's cantata *Hemmt eure Tränenflut* is far more convincing, albeit in a later style that forms a bridge with Telemann's fine single-movement setting of Psalm 8. It's a curious recital in that it holds together far better

than some of its constituent parts: the instrumental numbers frame the vocal ones very successfully.

The same might perhaps be said of the vocal cast, which is stronger as a group, and stronger still when supported by several instrumentalists. (That said, the concluding solo motet by Hammerschmidt, by some way his strongest piece here, is dispatched very confidently by the ensemble's countertenor.) The sound recording is at its most characterful in the organ works, recorded on the instrument of the church in Chancueil near Paris, an elegant instrument on which one might have wished for more information: the booklet says nothing of it and is silent on a good deal else, not least...most of the music.

Fabrice Fitch

'Li due Orfei'

Caccini Amarilli mia bella. Dolcissimo sospiro.

Mentre che fra doglie. Movetevi a pietà. Non ha' ciel cotanti lumi. Odi Euterpe. Perfidissimo volto. Pien d'amoroso affetto. A quei sospir ardenti.

Torna, deh torna. Tutto 'l di piango. Vedrò 'l mio sol **Luzzaschi** Canzona. Toccata del quarto tono

Peri Al fonte al prato. Tra le donne. Tu dormi.

Tutto 'l di piango. Un dì, soletto

Marc Mauillon bar **Angélique Mauillon** hp

Arcana © A393 (57' • DDD • T/t)

'L'arpa Barberini'

Anonymous Balletto. Madre non mi far monaca
Dell'Arpa Spera mi disse amore. Sospiri che
 uscite dall'arso mio sen. Dolce frutto Amor
 compose. Perché cor mio. Alma che ti sollevi
Frescobaldi Se l'aura spira tutta vezzosa.
 Fantasia. Parte sopra Lamonicha. Toccata ottava
 di durezza e ligature. Canzona. Corrente quinta
Kapsberger Toccata seconda arpeggiata
Quagliati Toccata dell'ottava tuono **Rossi** Hor
 che l'oscuro manto. Passacaille de Seigr Louigi.
 Mio ben, teco il tormento più
Roberta Invernizzi *sop* **Margret Köll** *hp*
 Accent ⑤ ACC24310 (64' • DDD • T/t)



Here are two dulcet albums by voice-harp duos exploring music from early-17th-century Italy. Marc and Angélique Mauillon focus on the rival Florentine inventors of opera, Jacopo Peri and Giulio Caccini. We are treated to a diverse selection of their monodic songs in *stile rappresentativo*: a cultivated solo voice emulating the contours of Tuscan poetry, accompanied by a continuo instrument improvising over a written bass-line.

The Mauillons draw their selection from various collections all printed in Florence: Caccini's *Le nuove musiche* (1602) is the best-known to posterity, and the Mauillons give a pleasingly natural rendition of the ubiquitous 'Amarilli, mia bella' (which every student of singing has been forced to learn for centuries). There are also songs taken from Caccini's follow-up *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle* (1614), and these clusters are interspersed with relatively fewer songs by Peri – some taken from *La varie musiche* (1609).

Marc Mauillon's ardently nuanced singing takes its cue directly from Caccini's advice about *sprezzatura*, instructing that the singer must give intelligent performances with an appearance of ease. The intimacy and melancholic sensitivity of Peri's 'Tu dormi, e 'l dolce sonno' (from a manuscript in the British Library) is aptly contrasted with livelier and more concise songs, such as Caccini's 'Odi, Euterpe' (a witty portrait of an elated lover addressing his remarks to the Muse of Music). Angélique Mauillon accompanies exquisitely on a triple harp modelled after early-17th-century Italian instruments by the Somerset luthier Simon Capp.

Margret Köll's choice of harp is integral to the concept of 'L'arpa Barberini' – a famous triple harp built in about 1620 for

the powerful Barberini family (not long before Bernini's patron Cardinal Maffeo Barberini became Pope Urban VIII). Accent's booklet contains several colour photographs of the ornately gilded and carved instrument, an X-ray image and a reproduction of Giovanni Lanfranco's allegory of music that was painted for the Palazzo Barberini in the 1630s (and which features the harp at its forefront).

Köll's hands weave their magic on a modern replica that produces a beguiling dynamic range of sonorities in a rippling toccata by Kapsberger and several pieces by Frescobaldi, and her partnership with Roberta Invernizzi yields radiant performances of songs by composers employed by the Barberini. Orazio Michi dell'Arpa (1594-1641), as his nickname suggests, was a renowned harpist; Invernizzi's account of a lover's plaint in 'Spera mi disse amore' has vivid emotional delivery, whereas the more naive lover's adoration in 'Dolce frutto Amor compose' is an ecstatic miniature. There is also an enraptured performance of Luigi Rossi's lament for Euridice ('Mio ben, teco il tormento più'), from his Paris opera *L'Orfeo* (1647) – one doesn't mind the tenuous connection to the Barberini harp when the music-making is as gorgeous as this is.

David Vickers

'Haec dies'

'Music for Easter'

Bassano Dic nobis Maria **Byrd** Haec dies. Pascha nostrum **Hadley** My beloved spake **Haller** Surrexit pastor bonus **Lassus** Aurora lucis rutilat. Magnificat octavi toni super 'Aurora lucis rutilat'. Surrexit pastor bonus **Lhéritier** Surrexit pastor bonus **M Martin** Haec dies **Palestrina** Terra tremuit **Rachmaninov** Vespers, Op 37 – Dnes' spasenije **Scheidt** Surrexit Christus hodie **Stanford** Ye choirs of new Jerusalem **Taverner** Dum transisset sabbatum **Vaughan Williams** Easter **SS Wesley** Blessed be the God and Father **Choir of Clare College, Cambridge / Graham Ross** with **Matthew Jorysz** *org*

Harmonia Mundi ⑤ HMU90 7655 (73' • DDD • T/t)



We all know what you get from an Oxbridge choral disc – at least we did until Graham

Ross arrived at Clare College, Cambridge, in 2010. Since then, the young Director of Music has taken the Oxbridge model of purity and precision – solid performances of core repertoire, often English, mostly Renaissance – and spiced it with an intelligent, unexpected approach to

programming. We still get all the classics, but also plenty of premieres and commissions, as well as neglected or unfashionable repertoire unearthed with Ross's unerring taste. The combination is a heady one.

Working their way through the Church seasons (we've already had Advent, Christmas, Passiontide, Pentecost and All Souls), the choir now arrive at Easter. Gone is musical penitence and in its place we have a collage of celebratory motets. Joy is always harder to sustain as a mood than Lenten gloom but Ross's programme balances extrovert Italian and English polyphony with works by Rachmaninov, Wesley and Vaughan Williams, as well as a premiere by Matthew Martin.

Light on their feet and silvery-bright in tone, the choir romp through Bassano's *Dic nobis Maria* and Byrd's setting of the title text. *Haec dies* effervesces just as it should, its unaccompanied thrills set against Martin's more muscular setting for choir and organ. Syncopated rhythms unite the two in a dancing sequence of rejoicing. Lhéritier's *Surrexit pastor bonus* offers a moment of contemplative respite – poised and beautifully shaped. If Rachmaninov's *Dnes' spasenije* and Vaughan Williams's 'Easter' from the *Mystical Songs* are less successful, it's only because the choir's youthful sound doesn't currently have quite the pyramid shape this repertoire needs, lacking anchoring weight from its basses to balance the brightness of its strong upper voices.

Alexandra Coghlan

'In memoriam'

Busiakiewicz Ego sum resurrectio et vita **Byrd** Laudibus in sanctis **Clemens non Papa** Ego flos campi **Grier** Panis angelicus **Kaner** Duo Seraphim **Keeley** Magnificat; Nunc dimittis **Lhéritier** Nigra sum sed formosa **M Martin** An Invocation to the Holy Spirit **S Milstein** ushnarasmou – untimely spring **Palestrina** Quam pulchri sunt gressus tui **Pitts** Pie Jesu (Prayer of the Heart) **Pott** Nigra sum sed formosa **G Wilson** Collegium Regale **The Choir of King's College London / Gareth Wilson** with **Alexander May, Graham Thorpe** *org*
 Delphian ⑤ DCD34146 (80' • DDD • T/t)



The death of David Trendell in 2014 at the age of just 50 deprived us of a larger-than-life figure who was not only a musical polymath (conductor, organist, singer, lecturer...) but someone much loved and who had a profound effect on all those who



Gareth Wilson directs a memorial tribute to David Trendell with The Choir of King's College London

came into contact with him, however briefly. This disc is the result of an outpouring of that love and, naturally, of grief, brought together in a splendid collection that stands as a celebration of David's life as much as a memorial.

Renaissance polyphony, a constant thread in David Trendell's life, and of much of which he was a transcriber and editor, is a thread that runs through this recording, linking together with recent works by composers who knew him and were, as Michael Emery says in his sensitive and informative booklet-notes, 'friends, pupils and colleagues (and, more often than not – in the case of such a sociable and gregarious man – a combination of all three)'. Some of them, such as Silvina Milstein's *usbnarasmou* and Francis Pott's *Nigra sum*, were composed specifically as memorial tributes; others are works that David had conducted or in some way been involved with.

These works vary enormously in style but perhaps the most unusual is Milstein's piece, the only one to step outside the Christian liturgical tradition, being a setting of a Sanskrit poem dealing with the themes of spring and rebirth. Its considerable technical difficulties are handled with aplomb by

the Choir of King's College London, but Pott's *Nigra sum* (paired, naturally, with the work of the same name by Lhéritier, a work David Trendell had edited) is also not without challenges; the 'suspended' ending is beautifully handled. The two organ-accompanied settings of the Evening Canticles, by Rob Keeley and conductor Gareth Wilson, relate more directly to the Anglican tradition, while Antony Pitts's *Pie Jesu (Prayer of the Heart)* strikingly combines texts from the Latin Requiem Mass and the Orthodox spiritual tradition. In many ways the most strikingly beautiful of the new works is Francis Grier's *Panis angelicus*, in which soprano and tenor soloists weave magical lines above the stillness of the male-voice choir, which ends it with a simple restatement of the words 'panis angelicus'.

I return to the Renaissance thread that runs throughout this recording: all four composers represented here – Byrd, Lhéritier, Palestrina and Clemens non Papa – were loved by David Trendell, and the choir performs this music in full knowledge of that, producing renditions of transparent beauty and exemplary balance. A radiant tribute to a radiant musician.

Ivan Moody

'Love'

Boësset Frescos ayres del prado. Quelles beautés, ô mortels (Récit de Mnemosyne)
Briceño Ay amor loco **Cesti** Disserratevi, abissi. Più bella maestà...Dormi, dormi, ben mio
Dowland Now, O now I needs must part **Eccles** I burn, I burn. Restless in thoughts **Lambert** Sombres déserts **Legrenzi** Chi mi tolse alle sfere!...Lumi, potete piangere **Manelli** Grida l'alma a tutt' ore **Merula** Chi vuol ch'io m'innamori. Folle è ben che si crede **Monteverdi** Lamento della ninfa – Amor, amor **Purcell** Dido and Aeneas – Thy hand, Belinda...When I am laid in earth. The Fairy Queen – If love's a sweet passion **Strozzi** Che si può fare?

Simone Kermes *sop*

La Magnifica Comunità / Enrico Casazza *vn*

Sony Classical © 88875 11138-2 (65' • DDD • T/t)



Part recital, part musical self-help manual, Simone Kermes's latest

album is a guide to love, 17th-century style. Whether your romantic affliction is 'desire', 'bashfulness', 'inexperience' or even (God forbid) 'fidelity', you'll find songs here to medicate you, all helpfully categorised and labelled in the booklet-

notes. It's a charming way of reinventing the oldest theme in the classical book, and Kermes's repertoire choices are wonderfully wide-ranging, taking in the inevitable Dowland, Purcell and Monteverdi, but also works by Cesti, Manelli, Antoine Boësset, Michel Lambert and those unparalleled 17th-century song-writers Tarquinio Merula and Barbara Strozzi.

This idea of the singer/song-writer is at the forefront of an album recorded almost like an acoustic session by a pop singer. Microphones sit close, and Kermes barely engages her support for much of the repertoire, preferring an intimate, white, often breathy delivery – a classical croon. Accompaniments are treated freely, and many works are newly arranged to bring a more folksy, unplugged sort of atmosphere to proceedings. It's an approach that works better for some works than others. Dowland, predictably enough, responds naturally to this treatment. 'Now, O now I needs must part' is beautifully judged (though the swooning string portamentos doubling the vocal line won't be to everyone's taste). Likewise, Monteverdi's *Lamento della ninfa* comes up fresh here, pulsing to the dance rhythms lost in Kožená's recent recording (DG, 4/16), and the addition of a viola d'amore to the Boësset is an inspired touch. Most successful, though, are the dramatic recitatives and ariosos that demand Kermes finally release something closer to her full voice, showing off the agility and vocal rhetoric that is her greatest strength. John Eccles's 'I burn, I burn' sizzles with emotional charge, while Manelli's riotous dance 'Grida l'alma a tutt' ore' is infectious in its energy.

But for too much of the album Kermes just isn't at her best. The fine-spun lines of Merula's 'Folle è ben' and Strozzi's 'Che si può fare' are much more interestingly wrought by L'Arpeggiata's regular collaborator Raquel Andueza on her 'D'amore e tormenti' (NB Records), and tuning more than once turns a little sour.

Alexandra Coghlan

'Rheinmädchen'

Brahms Vier Gesänge, Op 17. Thirteen Canons, Op 113 – No 2, Grausam erweist sich Amor an mir; No 5, Wille, wille will der Mann ist kommen!; No 13, Einförmig ist der Liebe Gram. Ich schwing mein Horn ins Jammertal, Op 41 No 1 **Isaac** Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen **Schubert** Coronach, D836. Gott ist mein Hirt, D706. Lacrimosa son io, D131b. Ständchen, D920^a **Schumann** Sechs Romanzen für Frauenstimmen, Op 69 – No 5, Meerfey; No 6, Die Capelle. In Meeres Mitten, Op 91 No 6. Wiegenlied, Op 78 No 4 **Wagner** Auf dem

Grunde des Rheines. Götterdämmerung – Der Rheintöchter; Siegfried's Funeral March.

Siegfried – Siegfried's Horn Call

• **Bernarda Fink** *mez* **Pygmalion / Raphaël Pichon**

Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2239 (75' • DDD • T/t)



Rivers tend to be men, but Father Rhine only had daughters to entertain him in his dotage. Those women are summoned up in this amorphous album delivered by the female singers of Ensemble Pygmalion, four horns and a harp. It's a bold attempt to put the phallic symbols of German Romanticism – thrusting symphonies, macho concertos – to one side and explore a softer, damper type of mood music by Wagner, Brahms, Schubert and Schumann.

If there is a feminist slant here, the point isn't laboured. The musicians are actually co-ed: the harpist is a man (Emmanuel Ceysson, who describes himself as 'the *enfant terrible* of his instrument', a position for which there must be few applicants), and so are three of the hornists and the conductor, Pygmalion's Raphaël Pichon. 'Rhinemaidens' is apparently the first of three Pygmalion albums which will gradually move forwards in musical history; the second will explore male voices and the third feature mixed voices.

Also saving the album from being a literal damp squib is the other major leitmotif. Canons run through nearly all the pieces, reinforcing ideas of flow – fluvial or otherwise – and development. These begin, appropriately, right at the bottom of the Rhine, in the Prelude to *Das Rheingold*, the horns' elemental calls buttressed by growling double basses, the wordless cries of the singers building to a shimmering climax. Wagner's *Ring* returns in Siegfried's Horn Call and his Funeral March, orchestrated for four horns (bouncily done, but a bit Bridlington bandstand rather than funeral pyre in Westphalia), and finally the Rhinemaidens' lament from *Götterdämmerung*.

Yet those are really atmospheric waymarks to guide you through rarer treasures by the other three composers. Siegfried's horn doesn't summon a slobbery dragon but Brahms's folksong (in canon, of course) 'Wille, wille will der Mann ist kommen!', followed by Schubert's 'Ständchen' for female chorus, harp and mezzo-soprano (Bernarda Fink), a real Biedermeier house-party extravaganza. In a section inspired by mourning, the Rhine's waters dissolve into the tears of Schubert's stark 'Lacrimosa son io', Schumann's

double canon 'Die Capelle', immaculately delivered, and back to Schubert for the remarkable 'Coronach', a keening lament to words by Walter Scott. With the voices now accompanied by declamatory horns and harp, the ballad has an authentically Gaelic feel without succumbing to new-age whimsy.

Indeed, it's the discipline of the delivery – whether it's the firm, resonant voices or punchy horns – that impresses most here. Both passionate and precise about their subject matter, Pygmalion have discovered watery depths to familiar composers, and have certainly not sold us down the river.

Neil Fisher

'Stunden, Tage, Ewigkeiten'

Grieg Gruss, Op 48 No 1 **Felix Mendelssohn** Sechs Gesänge, Op 19a – No 4, Neue Liebe; No 5, Gruss, Op 19a No 5. Neue Liebe. Auf Flügeln des Gesanges, Op 34 No 2 **Fanny Mendelssohn** Sechs Lieder, Op 1 – No 1, Schwanenlied; No 3, Warum sind denn die Rosen so blass **Rubinstein** Sechs Lieder von Heine, Op 32 **Schubert** Schwanengesang, D957 – No 8, Der Atlas; No 9, Ihr Bild; No 11, Die Stadt; No 13, Der Doppelgänger **Schumann** Dichterliebe, Op 48. Du bist wie eine Blume, Op 25 No 24. Belsazar, Op 57

Benjamin Appl *bar* **James Baillieu** *pf*

Champs Hill © CHRCDD112 (73' • DDD • T/t)



The first sighting of Benjamin Appl came a few years ago when clips were posted on

YouTube of his appearance in Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau's late masterclasses. Since then he has progressed to become a BBC New Generation Artist and an ECHO Rising Star. The various appellations seem well deserved. Appl has a baritone voice with its own character and a natural appreciation of the essentials of singing Lieder.

His programme of songs to poems by Heine ranges from Grieg to rarely heard Rubinstein, but is grounded in two masterworks, Schubert's *Schwanengesang* and Schumann's *Dichterliebe*. From the Schubert he sings four of the Heine settings (why not 'Das Fischermädchen' or 'Am Meer'?). In 'Ihr Bild' he is confiding and heartfelt. 'Der Doppelgänger' has atmosphere and the horror of its revelation is well judged. 'Die Stadt' benefits from subtle, twilight colouring, but the sudden burst of strength in the closing stanza does not fit with the rest and the quality of voice deteriorates. Each time this happens (try 'Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome' in



Pygmalion and Raphaël Pichon evoke the River Rhine in the altogether drier surroundings of Paris's Temple du Saint-Esprit

Dichterliebe) the sound is apt to become rough and a touch gritty.

Against that, he floats through Mendelssohn's beautifully rippling 'Schwanenlied' with mellow allure. Schumann's 'Du bist wie eine Blume' is expressively done and *Dichterliebe* as a whole, accompanied with sensitivity by James Baillieu, is engaging if a touch sombre, Heine's poetry clear and from the heart.

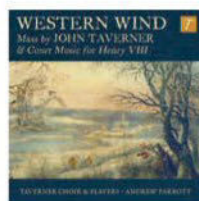
For a youthful comparison I turned to Christian Gerhaher's early recording of *Schwanengesang* (Arte Nova, 4/01). The big difference is that Gerhaher's singing is consistent in its beauty as well as remarkably precise in every detail – rhythms, enunciation, colouring of vowels. Appl is vocally less even but risks more spontaneity and always sings with feeling. Sample his debut solo disc and you will hear the current front-runner in the next generation of Lieder singers. **Richard Fairman**

'Western Wind'

Anonymous My Lady Careys Dompe. My Lady Wynkyfilds Rownde. O blessed Lord, how may this be. Western Winds. The Western Wynde. Westron Wynde. Wher be ye my love? **Aston** A Hornepype **Cornysh II** Fa ka sol. Yow and I and Amyas **Henry VIII** If love now reynyd (II). Taunder naken **Taverner** Audivi vocem de caelo.

Dum transisset Sabbatum (I). In nomine. Mass 'The Western Wynde'

Taverner Choir & Players / Andrew Parrott
Avie © AV2352 (79' • DDD • T/t)



Andrew Parrott's past recordings of Taverner count among his finest achievements, and it is little short of scandalous that they have never been reissued (glad to have got that off my chest!). While we wait, this new offering suggests that the hiatus of 25 years has not dulled his affinity for the music of his ensemble's namesake. And yet it is a very different sort of disc from those earlier, exclusively liturgical projects. Taking his cue from the secular *cantus firmus* of this recital's centrepiece, Taverner's *Western Wynde* Mass, Parrott turns his attention to the secular music of Taverner's contemporaries, not least Henry VIII, whose setting of the 'T'Andernaken' tune is one of his most accomplished compositions.

As one might expect, the cast is almost entirely different, though Emily Van Evera and Charles Daniels guest in a few numbers, such as Cornysh's wistful *Yow and I and*

Amyas. From a discographic standpoint, the instrumental numbers are very valuable, and dispatched with real flair. I particularly enjoyed Cornysh's *Fa la sol*, an extended untexted fantasia performed here on the mute cornetto, vielle and bray harp.

The *Western Wynde* Mass nicely contrasts with The Tallis Scholars' recording, being incisive and brisk where Peter Phillips's reading is smoother and more leisurely. Parrott is perhaps more persuasive in conveying its pacing, which runs through what seems on paper a forbiddingly severe formal plan; in the process he highlights Taverner's virtuosity in overcoming his self-imposed challenge. But perhaps the disc's most satisfying interpretations are the two responds for high and low voices respectively, *Audivi vocem* and *Dum transisset sabbatum* (I), which seem to me on a par with the Taverner Consort at their very best: the latter in particular combines that trademark incisiveness with superlative solo singing. Finally, the sound recording successively juggles a wide range of distributions, from harpsichord to choir, with no apparent discontinuity. **Fabrice Fitch**

Taverner Western Wynde Mass – selected comparison:

Tallis Scholars (9/93, 12/95, 1/07) (GIME)

CDGIM004, CDGIM027 or CDGIM207

REISSUES

Rob Cowan on DG's mono box, **Philip Clark** on Morton Gould in Chicago and **Peter Quantrill** on Mehta's Brahms

Mining DG's mono archives

As with the equally superb 'Decca Sound: Mono Years' set (3/15), everything about this engaging collection works – the choices, the transfers, the skilfully miniaturised LP sleeves that house each CD and the illustrated 145-page book which includes a concise and appreciative résumé of the set's contents by Tully Potter. This was a period of regeneration for Germany, and a time when DG's roster of artists could once again include musicians who just a few years earlier had – or would have – been barred on racial grounds (Ančerl, Askenase, Cherkassky, Fricsay, Bronisław Gimpel, Haskil, the Oistrakhs, the Amadeus Quartet and so on). Under the watchful eye of the Hungarian-Jewish Executive Producer Elsa Schiller, standards rose to unprecedented heights.

Most of DG's **The Mono Era** (£90 or thereabouts) subscribes to an audio aesthetic that places warmth, transparency and expert balancing as priorities. And while quite a few of the featured recordings have previously been available on CD, many are now fairly difficult to obtain. Being a committed Regerian, I was delighted to see the two great sets of Reger orchestral variations included, the *Mozart* (under Karl Böhm) and the *Hiller* (under Paul van Kempen). Both performances unfurl this marvellous music with a combination of refinement and humour. Böhm's CD also includes a judiciously paced and sensitively phrased account of Brahms's Second Symphony.

Among the many CD 'first timers', van Kempen conducts the Berlin Philharmonic for Adrian Aeschbacher in a ruggedly assertive Brahms Second Piano Concerto, with some *Hungarian Dances* as fill-ups. Pianist Conrad Hansen offers a stylishly played programme of Mozart keyboard sonatas where his mastery of the fortepiano suggests a role model for Andreas Staier. Among the quartet recordings included, the Koeckert Quartet sound authentically

Czech in Dvořák's *American* and bring both thoughtfulness and vitality to Bruckner's F major Quintet (with viola player Georg Schmid). Nice, too, to see the Loewenguth Quartet in an all-French programme, sonorous in Debussy and Ravel and with a busily animated account of Roussel's fascinating D major Quartet, Op 45, added for good measure.

Among the violin recordings new to CD, Bronisław Gimpel's reading of Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* stands out as exceptional, his tone virtually as expressive as Heifetz's; and, unlike Heifetz, he includes the tangy Intermezzo third movement. The disc is completed with a vigorous account of Dvořák's Op 46 *Slavonic Dances* played by the accompanying Munich Philharmonic under Fritz Rieger. Johanna Martzy offers trimly phrased performances of two sonatas, Beethoven's Op 30 No 3 and Mozart's K367, supplemented by various colourful shorter works, with pianist Jean Antonietti. But for me the most outstanding pianist collaborator is Hertha Klust for bass Josef Greindl in an unusually probing interpretation of Schubert's *Winterreise*, the two artists communing as one. 'Frühlingstraum' is the best place to sample.

Conductor Ferdinand Leitner casts a perfectionist eye across Haydn's Symphonies Nos 100 and 102, phrasing with the utmost care and drawing some superb playing from the Bamberg Symphony. Much the same might be said of Leitner's CD of third symphonies by Schumann and Mendelssohn (the former with the Berlin Philharmonic), Romantic masterpieces crafted by the hand of a true classicist while similar qualities greet Andor Foldes's Liszt piano concertos. Eugen Jochum's mono Beethoven Fourth with the Berlin Philharmonic (including the first-movement repeat) is another winner, while his BRSO version of Bruckner's *Te Deum* is truly thunderous, the organ

very audible even though the sound is sometimes constricted. By contrast, a CD of cello concertos by Haydn (D major) and Schumann featuring Enrico Mainardi with Fritz Lehmann conducting is so well recorded you can virtually tell that the instrument he's playing is of superb quality. Cellist Ludwig Hoelscher can be heard in intelligent duo partnership with Hans Richter-Haaser performing cello sonatas by Brahms (E minor), Grieg and Strauss, and there's an 82-minute programme of Beethoven piano sonatas (Opp 13, 27/2, 57 and 110) sombrely played by Elly Ney, although the generous playing time has been achieved at the cost of a repeat in the *Appassionata*'s finale (which Ney had observed on the original recording).

There are other first-time releases, but I couldn't possibly close without mentioning at least a few of the wonderful recordings that have been granted a previous CD existence: Karel Ančerl's Czech Philharmonic Shostakovich Tenth (with the wildest 'Stalin' scherzo you're ever likely to hear), Shura Cherkassky's coupling of the first two Tchaikovsky concertos, Igor Markevitch's version of Haydn's *The Creation*, Chopin sonatas with Stefan Askenase, Mozart concertos from Clara Haskil, Wilhelm Kempff in Schumann and Brahms, a programme of duets by the Oistrakhs and so much more. Even younger collectors who have no prior knowledge of these performances are likely to come away from this set with at least some of their musical preconceptions profoundly altered, which is surely what listening to great recordings is all about. **Rob Cowan**

THE RECORDING

Deutsche Grammophon: The Mono Era

DG (51 discs) 479 5516



Morton Gould in Chicago



Composer and conductor Morton Gould: a great favourite with the Chicago orchestra and audience

New York-born conductor-composer Morton Gould was never handed a formal role with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. But between 1965 and 1968 – during Jean Martinon’s tenure as Music Director – Gould became a favoured guest conductor who would cut a prized sequence of well-regarded recordings with the orchestra, with repertoire ranging from some of Charles Ives’s most searching and technically outré orchestral music to the shamelessly populist ‘The Wonderful Waltzes of Tchaikovsky’, an LP serving up extracts from Tchaikovsky ballets like bonbon helpings of Christmas cake.

I’d argue that the title of Gould’s first Chicago SO LP, ‘Contemporary American Masterpieces’, rather overstated its case. Aaron Copland’s *Dance Symphony* (1925) was cut-and-pasted from his earlier ballet score *Grohg* and lacks the cohesiveness and bawdy melodic charm of *Music for the Theatre* or the Piano Concerto, the pieces he composed directly before and after it. Never mind though. Gould and the CSO play with cast-iron certainty, as though this score might indeed be an unimpeachable masterwork. The rhythmic gambol and crunchy drill-bit high woodwind-writing of the *Allegro vivo* finale convert into a showcase for the orchestra’s red-hot woodwind section; but Gould also sculpts Copland’s contraflow turnarounds of mood with impeccable due diligence, while the

expressionist string-writing that defines the second movement gives notice of the CSO’s munificent, characterful string sound. Gould’s own *Spirituals for Orchestra* (1941) – recorded by Antal Dorati and the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra in 1953 – has not dated well but Gould makes more of its expressive virtues than Dorati.

Gould positions Ives’s First Symphony as an early example of the composer’s mischief-making

This box – which sells for about £26 – represents the first time Gould’s Chicago recordings have been collected together in a single release, and the obvious jewel in this box-set crown are his two Charles Ives discs, let down only by an oddly antiseptic *The Unanswered Question*. Gould pocketed a Grammy for this premiere recording of Ives’s Symphony No 1 and his high interpretative intelligence still rings true. Clearly Ives’s slow movement is a paraphrase of the *Largo* from Dvořák’s *New World Symphony*, and never more so than in Gould’s cotton-gloves unveiling of Ives’s theme, each phrase weighted so that the cultural link is obvious: very sumptuous cor anglais-playing, too. Performances of Ives’s First Symphony can often feel needlessly reined in – but through careful delineation

of Ives’s structural raspberries, Gould positions the piece as an early example of the composer’s mischief-making.

Gould’s follow-up Ives disc – featuring the Orchestral Set No 2, *Three Places in New England* and the *Robert Browning Overture* – is a smash hit from first note to last. Flatulent, tailgating low brass motor *Three Places in New England* relentlessly forwards; but it’s also worth appreciating how subtly and delicately Gould kneads the tempo around to keep the flow of metrical information vivid and alive. Orchestral Set No 2 is fastidiously detailed and atmospheric to a fault. The best, though, comes last. The *Robert Browning Overture* catches Ives at a point of compositional transition, between the faux-formality of the early symphonies and the structural audaciousness of the Orchestral Set No 2. Gould makes his case that here lies one of Ives’s greatest works – a pukka American masterpiece at last. More disciplined and measured than his later music, which actually heightens the music’s volatile ruptures, this 20-minute structure sounds like a compressed symphony caught in the process of tumbling into itself.

Gould’s recording of Carl Nielsen’s Symphony No 2, *The Four Temperaments*, and the Clarinet Concerto with Benny Goodman as soloist, helped clinch that special relationship that American conductors have had with the Danish composer, a lineage running from Bernstein and Ormandy through to Gilbert. Goodman delivers a starkly intimate performance. His tendency to rhapsodise the *Adagio* theme might feel a little period, but Gould truly oxygenates the unfolding structures of both works. As a never-heard-before bonus, Goodman transcends Gould’s rather stiff orchestration of the standard ‘Chicago’ with his trademark improvisational heat – Chicago audiences coming to hear the King of Swing obviously wanted fare more familiar than music by some dead Dane. ‘The Wonderful Waltzes of Tchaikovsky’ is let down by both its cherry-picking concept and by tart woodwind intonation; and while Rimsky-Korsakov’s crude and meandering symphonic suite *Antar* defeats even Gould’s structural antennae, Myaskovsky’s tautly argued Symphony No 21 was manna from heaven to Gould, Sibelius fan and orchestral wizard.

Philip Clark

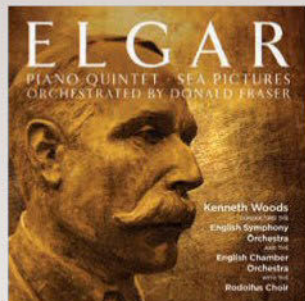
THE RECORDING

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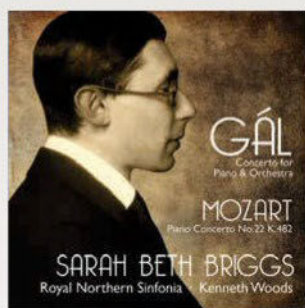
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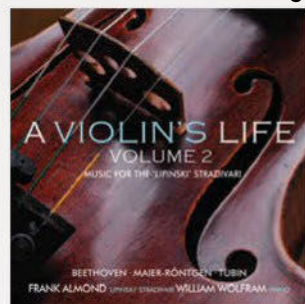


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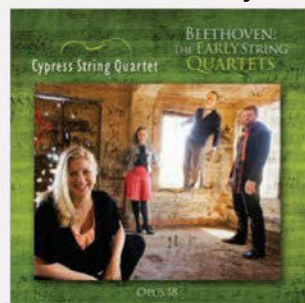
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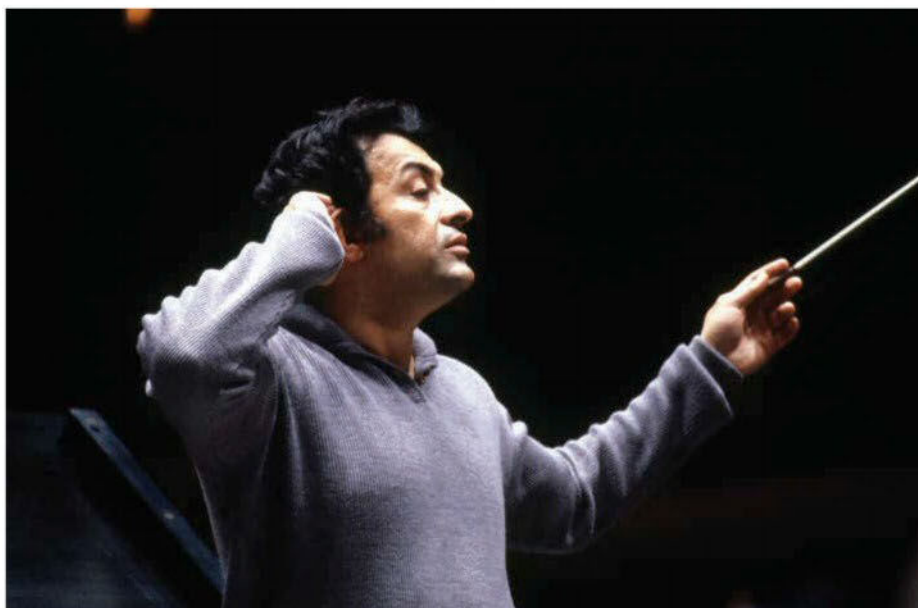
Godfather of instrumental music in New York for decades, Isaac Stern lent his seal of approval to Zubin Mehta as the Philharmonic's new Music Director by recording the Brahms Violin Concerto with them within months of Mehta's appointment, though the recording adds little to his more familiar interpretation with Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra. The remastering, however, marks a significant improvement on previous CD issues, being cleared of hiss and more generous to Stern's friends in the NYPO woodwinds.

The remainder of the set was made within the first third of Mehta's 12-year-tenure as Music Director. After Pierre Boulez's tenure, the NYPO was a responsive and adaptable instrument. It was understandable after a concentration on Stravinsky and Ravel that CBS should quickly seek to re-establish the orchestra's commercial ground in the German Romantics, though it was in fact with *Petrushka* that the NYPO and Mehta inaugurated the label's digital era.

Original reviews of the partnership's early digital LPs (especially Beethoven's *Eroica*) complained of dynamic compression, as if the engineers were afraid to damage their new equipment. Nowhere in the new box is it made clear whether these Brahms recordings are analogue or digital originals, but there are some peculiar balances. The *Haydn* Variations turn the usual orchestral balance upside down; the horns are almost offstage in their hunting variation, but in the first movement of the Second Symphony they take the spotlight with an entirely subsidiary motif. Brahms's anchoring bass is hollowed out and recessed.

The inner voices which drive the argument of outer movements are generally lost under a welter of high-octane violin sound, and there is a tendency to proceed at a healthy *forte* with damaging consequences for both the poetry and the drama of the symphonies. Brahms demands *più forte* (even louder) three times in the coda to the Fourth's opening movement, but the NYPO has nowhere to go. The suspicion lingers that when a solo clarinet or oboe does poke its nose out of a *tutti* texture, it does so almost by accident.

Mehta is a master of the smooth transition, which in the first movements of the symphonies can create the unnerving illusion of watching choppy



Zubin Mehta's two Brahms cycles, from New York and Tel Aviv, return courtesy of Sony Classical

seas from the upper deck of a cruise liner (I imagine): powerful forces are at work, and we observe them from a position of ease and comfort. The calm before and after the storm at the point of recapitulation is beautifully handled in the first movement of the Fourth, calling to mind Richard Osborne's remark about the end of the Third, that it 'probably brought us closer to the abyss's edge than we ever knew'.

In the *Academic Festival Overture*, Brahms's subversive compilation of popular, distinctly unacademic melodies, one tune succeeds another so seamlessly it isn't at first apparent that we're listening to different material. Both sets are full of such smooth and secure transitions. Slow movements drag at not especially slow tempi. The *Haydn* Variations' *grazioso* plods along with a sclerotic limp to the dotted rhythm, and the First Piano Concerto's *Adagio* is still more lifeless. Those who hear violence and even unconquerable rage in, say, the Scherzo of the Second Piano Concerto or the finale of the Third Symphony will look elsewhere, to conductors as diverse as Wilhelm Furtwängler and Sir John Eliot Gardiner.

When given their head in second themes and slow movements, the NYPO winds play out and leave niceties of dynamic shading to their colleagues in the Israel Philharmonic. The highlight of the concertos, perhaps of the NYPO set as a whole, is the *Andante* of the Second Piano Concerto, where cellist Lorne Munroe establishes a rapport of great stillness and

intensity with Barenboim, who integrates his touches of *rubato* within an affecting *cantabile* line. When the argument hots up in the outer movements, it tends to descend into a shouting match, crude and coarse. There is a more sensitive, collegial temperament to the Double Concerto with Pinchas Zukerman and Lynn Harrell.

How different is the cycle (the four symphonies, *Tragic Overture* and *Haydn* Variations) made with the Israel Philharmonic around 12 years later at the beginning of the 1990s. The First Symphony has a downbeat beginning, throbbing like the head of someone in search of an early-morning paracetamol, with an odd pull back to achieve the *crescendo* in bar 9 – a case of literal infidelity that is true neither to the letter nor to the spirit of the score. The playing is at once technically rougher, more heedless, yet tonally buffed with lustrous *legato*, strings like chamois leather to the wire wool of the NYPO. The performances are swifter, even fiery in the finales of the Second and Fourth, capable of setting the pulse racing on a first listen, which may be all they need.

Peter Quanttrill

THE RECORDINGS

Zubin Mehta conducts Brahms

New York PO / Zubin Mehta
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Zubin Mehta conducts Brahms

Israel PO / Zubin Mehta
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Opera



David Vickers watches the DVD debut of Hasse's *Artaserse*:

'Hasse ensures that the dramatic tensions are brought to the boil compellingly at the end of Act 2' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 89**



Hugo Shirley on an compelling Cav & Pag from Salzburg:

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Bizet

Carmen

Christine Rice *mez*.....Carmen
Bryan Hymel *ten*.....Don José
Aris Argiris *bar*.....Escamillo
Maija Kovaļevska *sop*.....Micaëla
Elena Xanthoudakis *sop*.....Frasquita
Paula Murrihy *mez*.....Mercédès
Nicolas Courjal *bass*.....Zuniga
Dawid Kimberg *bar*.....Moralès

Trinity Boys' Choir; Tiffin Girls' Choir; Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House / Constantinos Carydis

Stage director **Francesca Zambello**

Video director **Julian Napier**

Opus Arte © DVD OA1197D; © OABD7188D
(158' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080p • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • S/s)

Recorded live, June 2010



Carmen: a tale of passion played out in sultry Seville. Francesca Zambello's Royal Opera production provides

many of the ingredients: Mediterranean light, terracotta walls, locals working up a sweat, stripped to the waist to wash away the grime. There's even Pollyanna, the wide-eyed donkey, to add to the picturesque opening scene before being requisitioned by smugglers and finding herself in the mountains in Act 3! Zambello's detailed chorus direction means that her Seville teems with life – over-busy for some, but I've always enjoyed it. Alas, this revival is distinctly lukewarm, lacking the scorching passion required.

Christine Rice takes the title-role. I doubt Dame Janet Baker ever sang *Carmen*, but this is what it might have sounded like – a studied Lieder-singer approach rather than a wild femme fatale. Carmen doesn't have to be sung by mezzos with huge, voluptuous voices – Stéphanie d'Oustrac demonstrated Opéra Comique deftness and humour at Glyndebourne last summer – but it needs some sort of passion. Rice's chemistry with Bryan Hymel's Don

José is pretty frosty. Their final encounter has Rice looking like an imperious Elizabeth I, bored with her latest suitor. He'd be better off sticking with Micaëla.

Hymel is on good form, despite a tremulous vibrato and slightly nasal tone at the top. He excels in French repertoire and his 'La fleur que tu m'avais jetée' is a highlight of the evening. Maija Kovaļevska's Micaëla is touching, with pleasing tone, affectingly acted. Aris Argiris lacks strong lower notes as Escamillo and the bullfighter's natural swagger is absent. Among the supporting cast, Nicolas Courjal is a suave Zuniga. Arthur Pita's choreography adds authentic flamenco flair (although it should be illegal for opera singers to be handed tambourines as props). Constantinos Carydis conducts sensitively, although occasionally lacking the ebullience Bizet's score demands.

This DVD/Blu-ray was originally issued as a 3D Blu-ray in 2011. Thus, weird camera angles abound, as if the cameras were on stage, swirling around the protagonists in the final encounter, frantically trying to whip up excitement. If it's 3D *Carmen* you want, get yourself to an opera house. If it's Zambello's *Carmen* you want, you'd be better served by Decca's version of the production when new – Anna Caterina Antonacci and Jonas Kaufmann on scorching form.

Mark Pullinger

Selected comparison:

Pappano (10/08) (DECC) DVD 074 3312DH;

074 3313DH

Handel

'Arie per la Cuzzoni'

Admeto – Two Sinfonias; Ballo di Larve.

Alessandro – Nò, più soffrir non voglio. **Giulio**

Cesare – Che Sento? Oh Dio!...Se pietà di me non senti. **Ottone** – Concerto; È tale Otton?...

Falsa imagine. **Rodelinda** – Ombre, piante, urne funeste!; Se'l mio duol non è sì forte. **Scipione** –

Ouverture; Marcia; Sinfonia; Scoglio d'immota

fronde. **Siroe, re di Persia** – Non credo che sian finti...Or mi perdo di speranza. **Tamerlano** – Non

è più tempo. **Tolomeo, re di Egitto** – Ouverture;

Torni omai la pace all'alma

Hasnaa Bennani sop

Les Muffatti / Peter Van Heyghen

Ramée © RAM1501 (69' • DDD • T/t)



Handel's roles composed for the Parmesan soprano Francesca Cuzzoni

(1696–1778) have already been the subject of recital albums by artists as dissimilar as the limpid Lisa Saffer (Harmonia Mundi, 12/91) and the firebrand Simone Kermes (Berlin Classics, 8/09). The emulation of the concept by up-and-coming French-Moroccan singer Hasnaa Bennani is permissible because it compares a range of dramatic situations such as the candid intimacy of Teofane's bitter disappointment in 'Falsa imagine' (*Ottone*) and the feisty coloratura of Berenice's defiant 'Scoglio d'immota fronde' (*Scipione*), and such polar opposites sit attractively alongside beloved favourites for Cleopatra ('Se pietà di me non senti') and Rodelinda ('Ombre, piante').

Almost all of Cuzzoni's roles in Handel's operas are represented aptly, from the turbulent jealousy of Lisaura's 'No, più soffrir non voglio' (*Alessandro*) to Seleuce's lilting minuet 'Torna omai la pace all'alma' (*Tolomeo*). Bennani's nuanced phrasing and intelligent embellishments suggest a singer of real talent, although there is not always a vivid sense of her truly inhabiting each different character; for example, Asteria's 'Non è più tempo' (*Tamerlano*) is sung too chastely for the situation of her sarcastic taunting. On the other hand, anguish and lyricism are balanced flawlessly in Laodice's 'Or mi perdo di speranza' (*Siroe*), which concludes with a wonderfully judicious cadenza. Several overtures and assorted sinfonias are finely etched by the excellent Belgian band Les Muffatti and conductor Peter Van Heyghen; even if it is understandable why they include the Ballo di Larve from *Admeto* (the beginning of a famous scene for Senesino) on musical grounds, it is a



Aris Argiris as Escamillo in Covent Garden's *Carmen*

pity that there is no room for any of Antigona's arias from the same opera, and nor is there anything from Costanza in *Riccardo primo*.

The running order is sometimes a mite misconceived because moments conveying intense emotional climax are positioned much too early, and elsewhere consecutive depictions of intensity constitute an unyielding distortion of both Cuzzoni's and Handel's respective arts; seduction, teasing, happiness and celebration are in short supply. Now that the Handel-centric view has been presented several times over, perhaps an enterprising soprano might attempt to illustrate a broader perspective of Cuzzoni's career that includes other composers too. **David Vickers**

Handel

Arminio

Max Emanuel Cencic *countertenor*..... Arminio
Layla Claire *sop.*..... Tusnelda
Vince Yi *countertenor*..... Sigismondo
Ruxandra Donose *mez*..... Ramise
Juan Sancho *ten*..... Varo
Xavier Sabata *countertenor*..... Tullio
Petros Magoulas *bass*..... Segeste
Armonia Atenea / George Petrou
 Decca (M) ② 478 8764DH2 (151' • DDD • S/T/t)



Up until this month, Handel's 1736 *Arminio* was one of a very select club among

the composer's operas – those that had only a single commercial recording in the catalogue. Other members currently still include Handel's very first opera *Almira* and *Muzio Scevola*; but, thanks to the efforts of countertenor Max Emanuel Cencic, Decca has now released an *Arminio* to take on the as-yet-unrivalled 2001 recording by Alan Curtis and Il Complesso Barocco.

It's a particularly interesting new arrival as, unusually for Curtis, this first recording (now available as an Erato reissue) is feeling its age a little. Speeds tend to the matronly, and despite some outstanding contributions from Vivica Genaux in the title-role and Dominique Labelle's Sigismondo, the casting is more than a little uneven, especially among the lower voices.

Arminio is one of a trio of operas – along with *Giustino* and *Berenice* – all written within six months in 1736 – a period of anxiety and pressure for the composer. *Arminio* didn't do much to revive the

composer's fortunes, met with little public enthusiasm, was never revived during the composer's lifetime and was damned with faint praise by the Earl of Shaftesbury as 'rather grave, but correct and labour'd to the highest degree'.

Much of the blame for this muted success must be laid at the feet of the libretto – an anonymous hatchet-job based on an original libretto by Antonio Salvi, itself adapted from a source by Tacitus. The story is so distilled as to be almost incomprehensible, but sets two love stories against the backdrop of a battle between Roman forces (under General Varo) and Germans (under Arminio). Love, duty, patriotism and honour are the order of the day.

Handel's score is rich in compensations though, particularly Act 2, which closes with a sequence of contrasting, large-scale arias – Sigismondo's coloratura showcase 'Quella fiamma' and then Arminio's tragic 'Vado a morir' – a lament of near 'Scherza infida' stature. The writing for *Arminio* is especially strong, and Cencic makes the most of it, sustaining a rich, beautifully rounded tone through even the most athletic numbers. It's quite a contrast to Genaux, whose warrior is grainy, exciting in its dangerous roughness and intensity.

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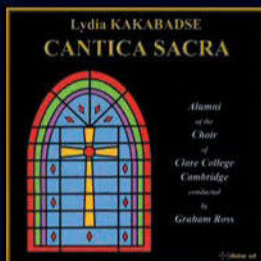
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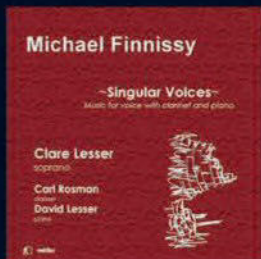
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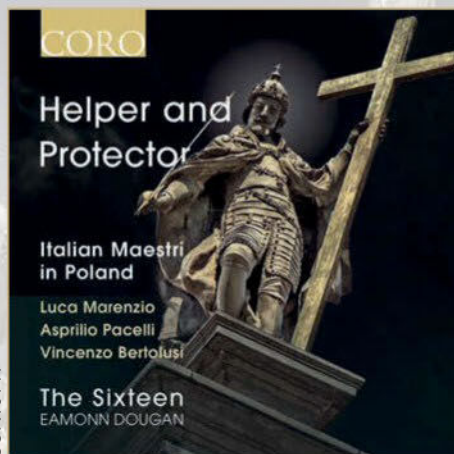
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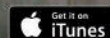
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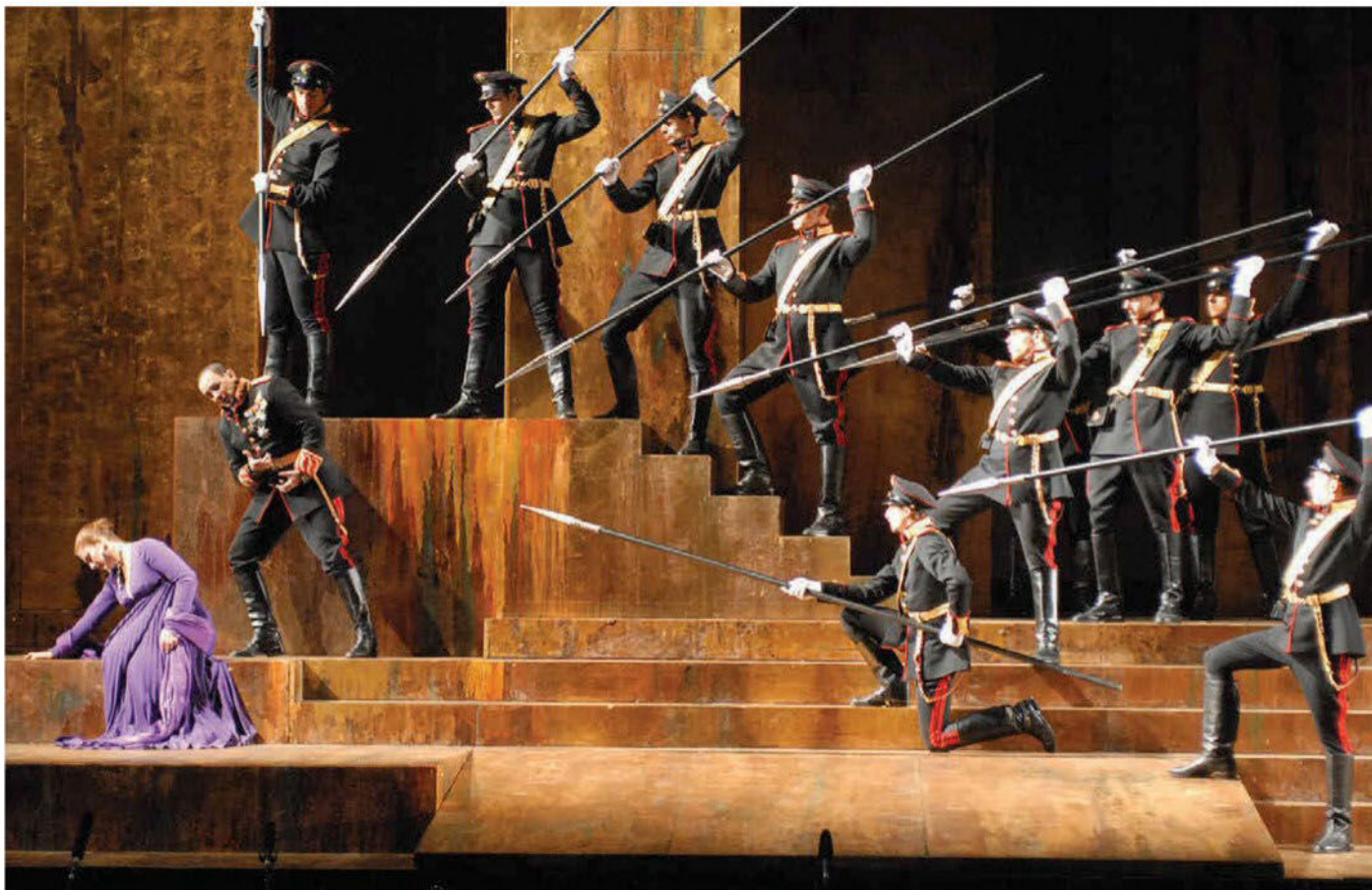
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Hasse's *Artaserse*, on stage at the Valle d'Itria Festival in 2012

Dramatically Cencic is more lover than warrior, but with three countertenors all jostling for space here, his voice offers a lovely middle-ground between Xavier Sabata's darker tone as Tullio and Vince Yi's feminine, silvery-bright Sigismondo. Yi's voice will not be to everyone's taste, tending to the pinched and shrill at the top ('Posso morir' is just one example), and uncannily white in its tone, but does rather suit the character of Sigismondo, Ramise's vacillating, weak-willed lover.

The real surprises here are Juan Sancho's Varo and Petros Magoulas's Segeste. Sancho may be a Baroque specialist (not that you'd know it here from the lack of any artist biographies), but there's a brilliance and a ring on the top of his tenor that speaks of *bel canto* to come. His Varo is passionate and vital, a worthy opponent for Cencic's Arminio. Magoulas, George Petrou's bass-of-choice, is another find, and his 'Fiacchero' sets the tone for a performance that balances agility with weight and heft – a tremendous improvement on the surface-skating lightness of Curtis's Riccardo Ristori. Canadian soprano Layla Claire (a fine Donna Anna at Glyndebourne in 2014) makes her commercial studio recording debut here as Arminio's wife Tuscelda. It's a quality, middleweight

voice, promising much for the future, with a darkness at the lower end that anchors the brilliance at the top. An underused Ruxandra Donose is luxury casting as Ramise, fiery and full-toned.

Petrou's direction keeps the drama moving, animated by clean articulation from Armonia Atenea. If the continuous playing doesn't always have the interest of Curtis's, then the ensemble make up for it elsewhere with swagger and speed. On balance, this *Arminio* is probably now the best out there. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Comparative version:

Complesso Barocco, Curtis (9/01st) (ERAT) 2564 68549-0

Hasse

Artaserse

Anicio Zorzi Justiniani *ten*.....Artaserse
Maria Grazia Schiavo *sop*.....Mandane
Sonia Prina *contr*.....Artabano
Franco Fagioli *counterten*.....Arbace
Rosa Bove *mez*.....Semira
Antonio Giovannini *counterten*.....Megabise
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Recorded live at the Palazzo Ducale, Martina

Franca, Italy, July 2012



Metastasio's librettos dominated the opera stages of Europe for most of the 18th century, and one of his

most popular dramas was *Artaserse*. A thrilling recording conducted by Diego Fasolis recently presented the original setting by Vinci, unveiled in Rome by an all-male cast on February 4, 1730 (Erato, 1/13, 7/14). Only seven days later Hasse's setting of the same libretto was premiered at Venice's Teatro San Giovanni Gristostomo. The cast included the castrato Farinelli as the hero Arbace (wrongfully condemned for treason); his beloved Mandane was sung by the prima donna Cuzzoni, who had left Handel's company in London about 18 months previously; and the villain Artabano was played by the castrato Nicolini, for whom Handel had written the title-role in *Rinaldo* nearly 20 years earlier.

Dynamic's recording (available on DVD and CD) captures a production staged in July 2012 at the Valle d'Itria festival in Puglia. Franco Fagioli sings the heroic part of Arbace (the same role he sang for

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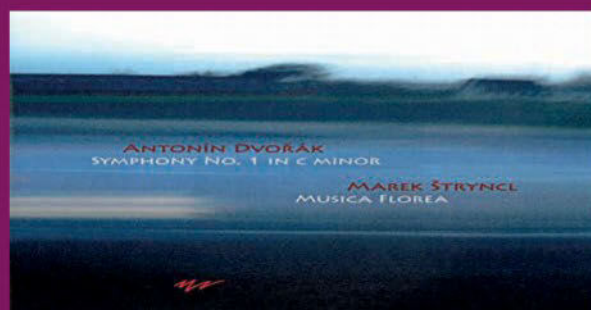
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On with the motley: Jonas Kaufmann in his role debut as Canio in the Salzburg Easter Festival's Pagliacci

Fasolis's recording of Vinci's setting); in extrovert coloratura arias neither his mannered singing nor posturing approach to skin-deep acting are dramatically convincing. However, Hasse ensures that the dramatic tensions are brought to the boil compellingly at the end of Act 2: Arbace's dignified return to prison after his treacherous father's condemnation ('Per questo dolce amplesso', sung tenderly by Fagioli) prompts Mandane's furious outburst ('Va' tra le selve ircane', executed by Maria Grazia Schiavo with dramatic authority and impressive vocal technique), to which the guilty Artabano responds in a tormented soliloquy, 'Pallide il sole' (an aria famous across Europe in the 18th century, sung eloquently by Sonia Prina).

The large outdoor stage influences the singers to make exaggerated yet vague gestures, and the static approach to staging recitative conversations between characters inhibits the detailed theatricality that Metastasio drama needs in order to come truly alive. Corrado Rovaris directs from the harpsichord with an astute eye on dramatic pacing, but there are a few musical bumps in the road. For example, in the Overture it takes the orchestra several bars to get themselves properly in time, and

too often Hasse's customarily long lyrical arias full of Lombard rhythms lack the deft limpidity they crave. Interested parties will find enough here to recognise some of Hasse's under-valued merits and therefore might not mind the warts-and-all performance or the uninspiring production – but it is at best a distinctly mixed bag.

David Vickers

Mascagni · Leoncavallo

Mascagni Cavalleria rusticana

Liudmyla Monastyrska *sop*.....Santuzza
 Annalisa Stroppa *mez*.....Lola
 Jonas Kaufmann *ten*.....Turiddu
 Ambrogio Maestri *bar*.....Alfio
 Stefania Toczyska *mez*.....Lucia

Leoncavallo Pagliacci

Maria Agresta *sop*.....Nedda
 Jonas Kaufmann *ten*.....Canio
 Dimitri Platanias *bar*.....Tonio
 Tansel Akzeybek *ten*.....Beppe
 Alessio Arduini *bar*.....Silvio
 Salzburg Festival Children's and Theatre Choir;
 Salzburg Bach Choir; Saxon State Opera Chorus;
 Staatskapelle Dresden / Christian Thielemann

Stage director Philipp Stölzl

Video director Brian Large

Sony Classical ® ② 88875 19340-9;
 © 88875 19341-9 (161) • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •
 DTS-HD MA5.0, DTS5.0 & LPCM stereo • 0 • s



This new *Cav and Pag* is doubly treasurable. Not only – as the label's blurb loudly but rightly proclaims – does it capture Jonas Kaufmann singing both Turiddu and Canio for the first time in this 2015 Salzburg Easter Festival production, but the tenor also sings them fabulously well. Once we get beyond Tiriddu's song to Lola, delivered introspectively but – in the context – effectively on stage, there's none of the self-regarding over-interpretation that for me can mar Kaufmann's performances in the theatre (although many prize his *mezza voce* more highly than I do). Instead we have plenty of the thrilling, untrammelled and ringing sound that the tenor is capable of at his best, with no loss of sensitivity in terms of musicianship or acting.

Happily, Kaufmann's outstanding central performances are well matched, both musically and scenically. Philipp Stölzl's production captures something of the expressionist feel and period of early

German cinema – and in so doing also underlines the parallels between that stylised aesthetic and that of *commedia dell'arte*, exploited in Leoncavallo's work. He directs everyone skilfully and makes ingenious use of a compartmentalised design in each work – six boxes, three across and two down, that can function independently, sometimes to have filmed close-ups projected onto them. It's an impressive effect that's very well captured in the video direction.

There are pros and cons to the concept, inevitably, and the cool palette of colours in *Cav*, in particular, reflects little of the drama's sun-baked atmosphere and attendant hot-blooded passions; a heady air of easy rusticity is replaced with a sense of heavy industrial smog. The Alfio-as-gangster conceit is more believable (thanks largely to Ambrogio Maestri's larger-than-life portrayal) than the idea of Mamma Lucia as a sort of town clerk. But we get an unexpected level of detail in the characterisation, particularly when it comes to the depiction of Santuzza and Turridu's domestic situation: a quiet, pervasive sadness hangs over their urban garret, into which Stölzl has added a choirboy son. It all helps make the two main characters more than just embodiments, respectively, of jealous womanly vengeance and immature macho irresponsibility and narcissism; Liudmyla Monastyrskaya's Santuzza, sung with rich and generous tone, is especially moving. The filmic nature of Stölzl's vision, meanwhile, serves to alter one's perception of Mascagni's episodic score by cleverly aligning its gearshifts with scene changes.

Pagliacci feels more conventional, with Canio's troupe bringing muted colour to the same worn-down world. Again there are pros and cons. Stölzl elicits a terrific central performance from Kaufmann once more: his clown comes across as threatening, short-fused and world-weary from the start – given an extra edginess by the addition of a Mephistophelian goatee – and he turns in a towering performance of 'Vesti la giubba' as one long crescendo. But I was less keen on the crowd milling around during Tonio's Prologue (its members distractingly singled out in the camera direction), and it's a shame that Stölzl's arrangement for the play-within-the-play sets up no fourth wall for Canio to tear angrily down at 'No, pagliaccio non son' – watch Vladimir Galouzine in Giancarlo del Monaco's Madrid production (Opus Arte) to see how shockingly visceral this moment can and really should be.

But, on his own terms, Stölzl creates a drama of real intensity. Maria Agresta is a fine, exciting Nedda and Dimitri Platanias sings eloquently as a subtly malevolent Tonio. Alessio Arduini's Silvio is pleasingly mellifluous, and his duet with Nedda, played

out in a line-drawn expressionist landscape, is happily uncut – though the hurried removal of his shirt at the start of it strikes me as inconsistent with the production.

Underpinning the whole enterprise is the luxurious support of Christian Thielemann and his Staatskapelle Dresden. There's a grandeur and sumptuousness to the sound and an occasional expansiveness to the conducting that are some way from being authentically Italianate, perhaps, but Thielemann is always aware of the drama and the beauties of the playing are many – the gentle way he has with *Cav*'s famous Intermezzo is understated, for example, but no less moving for it.

Maybe stick with Del Monaco's staging in Madrid for a more conventional modern version of both works, but this new account, built around two of Kaufmann's finest performances, is compelling and fascinating. Highly recommended, especially at Sony Classical's low price. **Hugo Shirley**

Selected comparison:

López-Cobos (1/08) (OPAR)

 O.A0983D;  O.ABD7018D

J Strauss II

Der Zigeunerbaron

Nikolai Schukoff *ten*.....Barinkay
Claudia Barainsky *sop*.....Saffi
Jochen Schmeckenbecher *bar*.....Zsupán
Jasmina Sakr *sop*.....Arsena
Khatuna Mikaberidze *mez*.....Czipra
Heinz Zednik *ten*.....Carnero
Renate Pitscheider *sop*.....Mirabella
Paul Kaufmann *ten*.....Ottokar/Pali
Markus Brück *bar*.....Count Homonay
NDR Chorus and Radio Philharmonic Orchestra / Lawrence Foster
 Pentatone   PTC5186 482
 (118' • DDD/DSD • S/T/D)



You can rely on Eduard Hanslick to get the wrong end of the stick. 'Close to the dangerous borderline of grand opera' was his verdict on *Der Zigeunerbaron* – to which many operetta lovers would respond, 'bring it on'. By writing a comedy set in Hungary and Vienna, Strauss may have been hedging his bets in both halves of the old Dual Monarchy. But with its melodic spiciness and dramatic sweep – particularly the magnificently extended finales to Acts 1 and 2 – he might just have created his single most accomplished stage work.

That's the quality that comes through most strongly in this new recording, apparently taken (the information in the booklet is sketchy) from a May 2015

Hamburg concert performance by the NDR Radiophilharmonie and Chorus under Lawrence Foster. The clear, natural-sounding recording gives more presence to the orchestra than you'd expect from an operetta recording, placing the voices within a broader texture.

The effect is twofold. You become more aware of the sheer beauty and harmonic imagination of Strauss's orchestral writing – listen to the gently blossoming eloquence of the short prelude to Act 2, or the nature sounds at the beginning of the finale to Act 1. And the whole thing takes on an added gravitas and dramatic depth: particularly in those two finales, which Foster paces with almost symphonic momentum.

But gravitas isn't, perhaps, the quality you might be looking for in a *Zigeunerbaron*. Singing might well be, and Foster's cast is well matched. As Barinkay, Nikolai Schukoff has an agreeable swagger, even if his voice has a tendency to flare at the top. Claudia Barainsky is a red-blooded Saffi and Khatuna Mikaberidze provides depth and tenderness as Czipra. Markus Brück gives Homonay an appropriately patrician bark while Jasmina Sakr as Arsena gets around her coloratura brightly enough. And Jochen Schmeckenbecher, in the great comic role of the pig farmer Zsupán, rolls his Rs with the best of them – though there are certainly riper Zsupáns in the catalogue.

That's the problem, of course: any new *Zigeunerbaron* is up against some impossible comparisons. Foster's team is simply outsung on every front by Franz Allers's 1968 Munich cast (which includes Nicolai Gedda, Rita Streich and Hermann Prey), and that in turn pales beside Otto Ackermann's glorious 1954 mono set, still – for style, atmosphere and pure *joie de vivre* – in a class of its own. It's rewarding to hear *Zigeunerbaron* played relatively straight but you do miss those naughty little flashes of glamour that make operetta so toothsome. A touch more paprika might have lifted this out of the concert hall; as it is, it remains – in every sense – a perfectly respectable *Gypsy Baron*. **Richard Bratby**

Selected comparisons:

Ackermann (10/58⁸, 4/01⁸, 9/09) (NAXO) 8 111329/30

Allers (5/78⁸) (EMI/WARN) 984664-2 or 2564 61270-3

Maximilian Schmitt

'Wie freundlich strahlt der Tag'

Flotow Alessandro Stradella – Wie freundlich strahlt der Tag. Martha – Ach so fromm **Lortzing** Zar und Zimmermann – Lebe wohl, mein flandrisch Mädchen **Marschner** Der Vampyr – Wie ein schöner Frühlingmorgen **Nicolai** Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor – Horch, die Lerche **Schubert** Fierrabras –

Was quälst du mich **Wagner** Der fliegende Holländer – Mit Gewitter und Sturm. Rienzi – Allmächt'ger Vater. Tannhäuser – Den Bronnen, den uns Wolfram nannte **Weber** Euryanthe – Unter blühenden Mandelbäumen. Der Freischütz – Nein! Länger trag ich nicht die Qualen
Maximilian Schmitt *ten* **WDR Symphony Orchestra, Cologne / Patrick Lange**
 Oehms © OC1836 (60' • DDD)



Perhaps still more known as an early music and Lieder singer, Maximilian

Schmitt has made a pertinent selection for his lighter tenor of arias from early German Romantic opera. The result makes for a snapshot of the changes in international repertoire history: outside Germany the names of Flotow, Marschner, Lortzing and Nicolai, and even of their actual arias, are more quoted now than actually performed, at least since the days of Fritz Wunderlich.

The programme also brings a chance to hear the Wagner and Weber items with a more lyrical approach than we're now accustomed to – period research hasn't always (re-)established period voice in our ears. And there's a rare chance to hear the aria from *Der Vampyr* – the opera itself a big influence on the story and mood of Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* – to which Wagner added a stretta to hot it up for his brother to make more of an impact as Aubry (although we stay with unvarnished Marschner here).

All that said – and the curious might already have had appetites whetted – this remains a well-prepared and honestly delivered project rather than a thrilling recital. The most successfully realised items are the most gentle ones – Flotow's *Alessandro Stradella* invocation of the Virgin, the French ambassador's serenade from Lortzing's *Peter the Great* operetta, Adolar's praise of Euryanthe (Weber). Here Schmitt's simple sincerity and beauty of tone carry the day – whereas it's a little hard as yet to believe from his vocal acting that he is surrounded by the 'dark powers' from Weber's *Freischütz* or has been struggling with the personal and political nightmares of ruling Wagner's Rome. The performance by orchestra and conductor is well up to the mark – a good size of band (not too large), awareness (if not imitation) of period, and committed readings from Lange, who has appeared at Glyndebourne and Covent Garden. A naturally balanced recording too. The booklet seriously lacks texts and translations and background on the actual music. **Mike Ashman**

'Arias for Annibali'

'The Dresden Star Castrato'

Feo Andromaca – Quel nocchier che vana ogn'opra **Handel** Arminio – Vado a morir. Berenice – Se il mio amor fu il tuo delitto **Hasse** Cleofide – Cervo al bosco. Irene – Perfidi, sul mio core **Latilla** Romolo – Così geloso un angue **Porpora** Filandro – Terra è questa...D'esser già parmi. Germanico in Germania – Qual turbine che scende **Ristori** Componimento per musica – Sì, rifiorite...A vostro dispetto. Le fate – Bellezze adorate **Zelenka** Il serpente di bronzo – Già ripiglia vermiglia la rosa **Flavio Ferri-Benedetti** *countertenor* **Carla Nahadi Babelegoto** *sop* **Il Basilico** / **Eva Saladin** *vn*
 Pan Classics © PC10341 (65' • DDD • T/I)



Domenico Annibali (c1705–c1779) was employed at the

Dresden court opera from 1730 until his retirement in 1764 – but from time to time he was given leave of absence to appear in Rome (in 1732 and 1739) and London (1736–37). Eleven arias from his repertoire are explored in a cleverly varied recital by Flavio Ferri-Benedetti (an alumnus of the Schola Cantorum in Basel) that helps us to see the bigger picture.

The graceful 'Bellezze adorate' from Ristori's *Le fate* (Dresden, 1736) is sung with eloquent tastefulness, whereas Alexander the Great's 'Cervo al bosco' from Hasse's *Cleofide* (Dresden, 1731) has florid singing that is both precise and shaded poetically – and Olivier Picon's brilliant horn obbligato and Ori Harmelin's nimble theorbo flourishes are reminders that the Dresden court orchestra was without equal in Europe. Il Basilico's strings are virile in the title-role's flamboyant description of a furious whirlwind in Porpora's *Germanico in Germania* (Rome, 1732), which is contrasted immediately with Handel's sublime depiction of Arminio's tender farewell to his beloved as he anticipates his execution by Roman invaders ('Vado a morir'); Ferri-Benedetti's softly emotive *messa di voce* and elegant embellishments are delightful.

Less immediately convincing is some extravagant ornamentation descending deep into the baritone register in Feo's 'Quel nocchier che vana ogn'opra' from *Andromaca* (Rome, 1730). The concluding set-piece 'A vostro dispetto' from Ristori's *Componimento per musica* (Warsaw, 1736) is a thrilling *tour de force* – although the cadenza finishes up the octave in a manner that I personally find a bit clumsy (others may find it energetic). Nevertheless, this diligent exploration of mostly unfamiliar music is an auspicious debut from these talented performers. **David Vickers**

IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

• Vänskä resumes Sibelius cycle

Osmo Vänskä is one of the major Sibelius interpreters of our time, so it came as a blow when his series of the seven symphonies with the Minnesota Orchestra was brought abruptly to a halt when the players were 'locked out' between 2012 and 2014. The good news is that they are now due to complete their cycle. Symphonies Nos 3, 6 and 7 will be recorded in nine sessions at the city's Orchestra Hall in May and June; BIS remains the label and a release date of this September has been pencilled in.

• Esther Yoo's Tchaikovsky

Gramophone greeted an 'impressive debut disc' by **Esther Yoo** (pictured) in the April issue, and we learn that the American violinist



has just recorded her follow-up album for DG. Once again accompanied by Vladimir Ashkenazy and the Philharmonia, this time she tackles Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto. We're yet to be informed of the release date.

• Orchestras on Onyx

The Onyx label continues two series of orchestral recordings in April and May. **Vasily Petrenko** and the RLPO are recording Elgar's Second Symphony and the overture *In the South* as a companion disc for their Elgar First (5/15), and **Andrew Manze** joins the orchestra for the second instalment in his Vaughan Williams cycle, focusing on the Third and Fourth Symphonies. Expect to see the two discs next February and March.

• Mozart on Signum

Classical Opera continue their exploration of Mozart's operas with *Zaide* – for which they are joined by soloists including Sophie Bevan and Allan Clayton – due out in October. **Sophie Bevan** has also recorded a Handel, Mozart and Beethoven recital disc with the ensemble, for release next spring.

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

Maestro memories

A welcome Mravinsky survey, rediscovering a remarkable Czech conductor, plus a rare Copland concert

Scribendum has been doing us a great service by gathering together significant orchestral recordings from the deeper recesses of the analogue tape era. A seven-CD set devoted to live performances that **Evgeny Mravinsky** and the Leningrad Philharmonic gave in Moscow in 1965 and 1972 is in effect a melding of two previous collections, the latter a good deal less familiar than the former. For example, among the Wagner items included is a *Tannhäuser* Venusberg Music from January 1972, sleek and driven but with the most sublimely beautiful coda. It also includes two versions of Shostakovich's Sixth, the earlier sporting typically extreme dynamics, with streamlined execution and a lightning finale, the 1972 version conceptually similar but marginally more powerful. A third version appears in an interesting six-CD Vol 1 of Profil's Mravinsky Edition, from 1946 – the mono production is angular and just a little cautious, even though the playing is mostly excellent.

The Mozart Symphony No 39 on Profil (1961) is not the same as the more refined 1965 version on Scribendum. Profil also offers us a disarmingly gentle account of Ravel's *Pavane* and a tense but controlled live *Boléro*. Tchaikovsky's last three symphonies are presented as recorded by DG in 1960, thrilling in the extreme and drilled down to the last semiquaver, but by 1972, when all Mravinsky's recordings were being made live, the Fifth had slipped the leash and even the odd passing blemish can't disguise the fact that the older maestro had more red blood coursing through his veins live than in the 1960 studio version.

Scribendum also offers us two Beethoven symphonies, the Fourth both lyrical and pacy, the Fifth starting shakily but, once past the first movement's repeated exposition, on course for a truly

monumental reading. Profil's package has Richter playing Brahms's Second Concerto (said to be from May 1951 but identical to the 1961 version on Russian Disc RDCD11158) and Tchaikovsky's First, as well as a superb Haydn *Clock* Symphony, and on Scribendum, a Tchaikovsky *Francesca da Rimini* that is nothing short of staggering. Nonetheless, Mravinsky first-timers should gravitate first to Scribendum. Then there's Melodiya and its Mravinsky series, so there could be riches galore there too.

A second Scribendum set (13 CDs) is devoted to **René Leibowitz**, best known in his day as a tireless promoter of new music (his own included) but who also recorded for Reader's Digest. Some of the repertoire is unexpected – soupy arrangements of *Greensleeves* and *Londonderry Air* for example – but there are more than enough quality gems to suggest mandatory purchase. A fine Beethoven symphony cycle, for starters, with tempi hovering around Beethoven's suggested metronome markings and plenty of drama. This was the RPO in fine fettle at the end of the Beecham era, and with high production values (Charles Gerhardt and Kenneth Wilkinson) we're also guaranteed remarkably good sound. Try the Ninth (with Inge Borkh heading the vocal quartet) and the more relaxed Sixth. Other highlights include a Schubert Ninth with just about the most deliriously joyous finale I've ever heard, a fiery Mozart *Jupiter*, a bold, brassy Schumann *Rhenish*, a tasteful though virtuoso Grieg Concerto with Earl Wild and a very good Mussorgsky *Pictures at an Exhibition* (in Ravel's orchestration). Regarding the coupling on that particular CD, *A Night on Bare Mountain*, I consulted that expert on vintage stereo blockbusters, Edward Johnson, who tells me that Gerhardt

played Stokowski's version to Leibowitz but wanted a new ending. Edward writes: 'what he got from Leibowitz was a re-scored version (a wind-machine and much else being Leibowitz's own ideas) and a somewhat Schoenbergian ending which, Chuck Gerhardt admits, wasn't what he wanted at all.' To my ears it all works extremely well – Disneyfication beyond anything Stokowski had achieved. Another stunner is Liszt's First *Mephisto Waltz*, as much for the dazzling sound as for the brilliant playing. I haven't heard another version that makes such a striking effect, unlike *The Rite of Spring* which bizarrely, given Leibowitz's expected skill in new music, is sluggish and heavy-handed. There are also some Paris recordings (Orchestre de la Société) including a sultry, raw-edged *Boléro* (even more imposing than Mravinsky's) and the standard Borodin *Prince Igor* orchestral excerpts. So much more besides, of course, though be warned that neither Scribendum set includes any notes. Still, at the asking price, who cares; and besides, very little of what you need to know isn't available online, somewhere. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



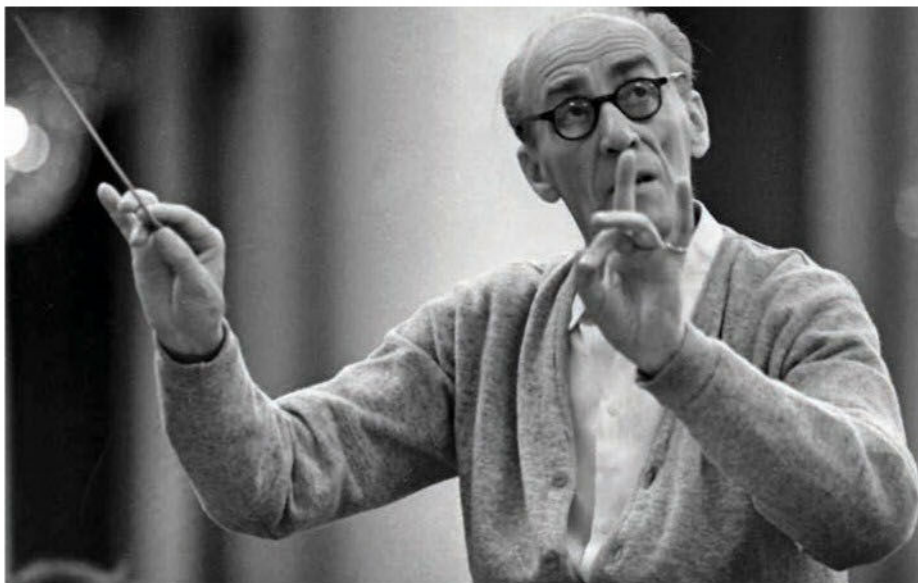
**The Art of Mravinsky:
In Moscow 1965 and 1972**
Scribendum © ⑦ SC503



**Evgeny Mravinsky
Edition, Vol 1**
Profil © ⑥ PH15000



The Art of Leibowitz
Scribendum © ⑬ SC510



Some rare live recordings from Evgeny Mravinsky make welcome reissues on Scribendum and Profil

Dvořák and Schumann from Cleveland

Eight years younger than Václav Talich's Czech Philharmonic recording for HMV, **Erich Leinsdorf's** quick-fix Dvořák Sixth with the Cleveland Orchestra manages a style that approximates both Toscanini and Szell while missing the quality that made both conductors so distinctive – a singing line. On the basis of thrills-per-minute Leinsdorf does well, his first movement beating Talich to the finishing post by three minutes. The finale clocks up a parallel timing of 9'17" but what one most misses is the easeful, sun-drenched mood that is at the very heart of this wonderful work. Schumann's *Spring* Symphony stays strictly within army barracks, the repeat-free first movement abrupt and militaristic-sounding, the *Allegro* (with what sounds like at least one textual misreading) *molto vivace* with a vengeance. The *Larghetto* at least manages a measure of expressive sweetness. Both performances grip, though it's something of a relief when they let go.

THE RECORDING



Dvořák. Schumann
Leinsdorf
Opus Kura © OPK7075

František Stupka conducts Dvořák

My experience of **František Stupka's** Dvořák got off the ground with an

Arlecchino CD coupling the Eighth Symphony with the Cello Concerto (André Navarra) and a Panton LP double-pack that included the *New World* (also with the Eighth). So it's good that Supraphon has made these recordings available for streaming (on Apple Music, Qobuz and Spotify among others), because the sheer visceral excitement that these performances generate, especially in the Eighth (from 1959) surely matches anything we have from Ančerl, Kubelík or Talich. Try the Eighth's finale – the stamping emphases as the faster music gets into its stride; and the coda, less reminiscent of other great Czechs than of Bruno Walter on his later Columbia recording. It's an aching farewell with Stupka, seemingly never wanting the work to end. The first movement is equally thrilling; and as for the *New World* (1964), a rather cavernous recording unfortunately, try the opening of the finale, which bounds away like an excited *Slavonic Dance*. Regarding Stupka himself (there are no notes provided and precious little information available online), Tully Potter informs me that he was born in Tedražice in 1879 and died in Prague in 1965.

He was an excellent violinist, a pupil of Ševčík, and worked as concertmaster at the Odessa Opera. Stupka also played with the famous Jaroslav Kocián in a short-lived but important all-Czech quartet with Perman and Zelenka, an influence, along with other Odessa Czechs, on the young David Oistrakh, who loved going to the opera and named Stupka as a fiddler he especially liked. Stupka was made a National Artist. So there you are: a name to reckon with, whom we hardly know. Hopefully Supraphon will make the Cello Concerto

with Navarra available too and maybe locate some other recordings, considering Stupka conducted the Czech Phil between 1919 and 1946 and was also in charge of the Moravian Philharmonic, 1946-56.

THE RECORDING



Dvořák Symphonies Nos 8 & 9
Czech PO / Stupka
Available to stream on Apple Music, Qobuz and Spotify

Koussevitzky's Copland

Pristine Audio's remastering engineer Andrew Rose is apologetic at not being able to improve on the source material for a rare November 1946 New York broadcast of Copland's Third by the Boston Symphony under Serge Koussevitzky, the conductor who had commissioned the work and led the premiere the previous month. However, to my ears, Rose has done a superb job, and while disc surface levels are sometimes higher than normal, the compromised sound relates a performance that is remarkable for its sweep (even within the first couple of minutes), the sweetness of the string-playing, and a high level of energy; specifically in the Prokofiev-like scherzo and the fierce attack of the strings after the *Fanfare for the Common Man* opening to the finale (3'30" into tr 5). It's quite an achievement, especially when you consider that this was a fresh-minted work that makes considerable demands on the players. Only the lead trumpet tends to fall from grace. *Quiet City* is similarly afflicted, though in the Symphony the brass choirs generally have a resplendent ring to them. Best though is the reading of the *Appalachian Spring* Suite, as lovely and lively a performance as I've heard in years, more affecting than Koussevitzky's on RCA, and exhilarating in the faster dances and tender in the slower music. I was half-dreading the very close of the piece where, having drawn the score to an ecstatically quiet and beautiful ending, Koussevitzky might have anticipated an instantaneous storm of applause. But no – we're granted a communal held breath that lasts a good 13 seconds before the applause (and back announcement) finally breaks in. Now that's what I call true appreciation. **G**

THE RECORDING



Copland
Koussevitzky
Pristine Audio © PASC458

Books



Richard Wigmore reviews a new study of Bach's vocal works:

'Rathey's expertise in Lutheran theology pays particular dividends in his chapters on the Passions and their place in the liturgy'



Philip Kennicott on an exploration of an American soprano's allure:

'Listeners remember discovering Beverly Sills being like a religious conversion and cite the power of her voice as life-changing'

Bach's Major Vocal Works

Music, Drama, Liturgy

By Markus Rathey

Yale, HB, 234pp. £25.00. ISBN 978-0-300-21720-9



Good Fridays in 18th-century Leipzig were not for the weak-bladdered. Whereas we stretch our legs

or, with luck, nip out to the bar during the interval of a Bach Passion, the burghers in St Thomas's and St Nicholas's stayed put for a lengthy sermon. This was not a concert but a Vespers service, framing the Passion with congregational hymns and throwing in a motet for good measure. On Good Friday 1724 the *St John Passion* doubtless alarmed many listeners with its stark, often violent theatricality. With the *St Matthew Passion* three years later, Bach offered his Leipzig congregation a sacred work hardly less theatrical, but unprecedented in scale and expressive reach. By the end of the final hymn the faithful would have been seated in St Thomas's for four hours plus.

The Passions form the central chapters of this study by Bach scholar Markus Rathey, associate professor at the Yale School of Music. His avowed aim is to illuminate the music and liturgical context of Bach's major sacred works – the Passions, the *Christmas*, *Easter* and *Ascension* Oratorios, the *Magnificat* and the B minor Mass – for a non-specialist audience. Rathey is no prose stylist. And in his determination to make his writing 'accessible' he doesn't always avoid the naive or the glaringly obvious. He also seems to think that if a thing is worth saying, it's worth saying twice, and then some. More than once he writes 'As I have explained in a previous chapter...' and then repeats the explanation in full. Such clunkiness betrays the book's origin in university lectures. In preparing it for a wider public, Rathey and his editor should have sorted this out.

Still, if you install your own auto-filter, there's plenty to stimulate and ponder here. Rathey's expertise in Lutheran theology pays particular dividends in his chapters on the Passions and their place in the liturgy. He discusses the relatively little-known *Easter* and *Ascension* Oratorios against the political and philosophical landscape of the time, drawing on the contemporary writings of John Locke, Leibniz and Christian Wolff. Quoting from a range of theological writings, he shows how medieval tradition intersects with Bach's text in the *St John Passion*, and how the various carefully chosen poetic sources create a 'polyphony of voices' illustrating different layers of time and space.

Rathey's analyses of individual movements tend to offer more theological than musical illumination, though there are exceptions: say, when he discusses Bach's simultaneous presentation of suffering and divine glory in the opening chorus of the *St John Passion*, or demonstrates how Bach undermines Peter's apparently confident denial with subtly dissonant harmony. Emphasising the crucial importance of *inhabito* – the presence of Christ in the heart of the believer – for Lutheran theologians, Rathey perceptively analyses the final bass aria in the *St Matthew Passion* as the consummation of a mystic union between the Believer-as-Bride and Christ-as-Bridegroom initiated in the monumental opening chorus, in a similar swaying 12/8 metre.

A leitmotif in these and other chapters is the concept of mutual love between Christ and the believer, encapsulated in the words of the preacher Heinrich Müller, whose writings were known to Bach: 'Your Jesus loves you. Love seeks to be united with the beloved. In order to be united with you, Jesus has united himself with your flesh.' In the chapter on the *Christmas Oratorio*, Rathey demonstrates the aptness of Bach's 'parody' technique in which profane songs and love duets were fitted with sacred words. In the process the erotic becomes spiritualised. Many scholars have deemed the echo effects in the soprano's 'Flösst mein Heiland' arbitrary in their new,

sacred context. Rathey's vindication of them is underpinned by a 17th-century illustration depicting the dialogue between Christ and the believer as an echo – one of several well-chosen drawings and engravings reproduced in the book.

While the level of scholarly accuracy is high, as you'd expect, the odd slip can creep in. In the *Magnificat*, for example, the soprano aria No 3 (dubbed by Rathey 'Mary's song of humility') is 'Quia respexit', not 'Et exsultavit'. This book will be a useful companion for anyone wanting a concise (arguably not concise enough) discussion of Bach's larger choral works from a theological and liturgical perspective. But I suspect most *Gramophone* readers will be happier with John Eliot Gardiner's panoramic *Music in the Castle of Heaven* (Allen Lane, 11/13), which combines detailed musical insights with a narrative verve and stylistic flair that elude the more dogged Rathey.

Richard Wigmore

The Magic of Beverly Sills

By Nancy Guy

University of Illinois Press, HB, 272pp. £22.99

ISBN 978-0-252-03973-7



Nancy Guy's *The Magic of Beverly Sills* looks like any other diva biography: it has an ebullient title, a gallery of

glossy black-and-white photographs documenting the American diva's career from the early 1950s and a glamorous dust-jacket image of the red-haired soprano dressed as Massenet's Manon and clutching a bouquet of roses. But the author devotes a scant and workmanlike three chapters to Sills's career, with only a few paragraphs given to her myriad accomplishments as a formidable fundraiser and arts executive after she left the stage in 1980. The bulk of the book is devoted to analysing 'the magic', through online testimonials and personal correspondence with Sills's fans, close



Early Sills: the American soprano as Tosca (with William Chapman as Scarpia) in Ohio in 1957

listening to her recordings, exploration of Sills's hand-annotated piano vocal scores and a cumbersome clutter of sociology, ethnography, psychology and theory.

Guy is an associate professor of music at the University of California, San Diego, and among her publications is *Peking Opera and Politics in Taiwan*. She acknowledges from the start that she was drawn to Sills as a subject because she, too, is a fan. But she was also determined to write what she says 'is the first scholarly book' on the subject. Unfortunately, that means a lot of leaden prose and the reflexive citation of other people's ideas, even when they are not particularly relevant. Immediately after acknowledging that academics are discouraged from admitting they may share the 'irrationally exuberant' feelings of being a fan, Guy writes: 'Joli Jensen's survey of popular and scholarly literature finds that the concept of fan often involves images of social and psychological pathology.' Or, after quoting from Sills's own account of her Metropolitan Opera debut – long delayed by the snobbery of the irascible Met General Manager Rudolf Bing – Guy turns to the Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow: 'Flow denotes the holistic

sensation present when we act with total involvement.'

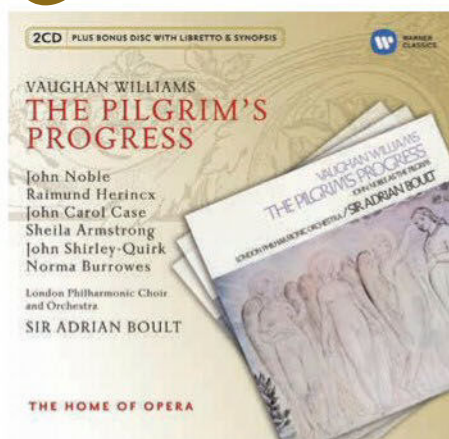
So *caveat emptor* to anyone who enjoyed the frothy fun of Sills's own autobiographies, including the 1976 *Bubbles: A Self Portrait*, or any of the other highlights of diva literature, especially Galina Vishnevskaya's *Galina: A Russian Story*. But there are moving passages in Guy's survey of what fans say about their love for Sills. Guy used online comments on YouTube videos, and testimonials she found on the 'Farewell Guestbook' maintained at beverlysillsonline.com after the singer's death. In some cases, she contacted the commenters directly, and became part of a vibrant online community of Sills aficionados. Thus she has tapped into a fascinating and underutilised but problematic resource: the private, often deeply personal reminiscences of a widely dispersed audience, all of them passionately committed to Sills. Listeners remember discovering her being like a religious conversion, they cite the power of her voice as life changing, and they mourn her death (in 2007) in some cases as deeply as they might mourn the death of near kin.

Sills's public persona is an essential part of her fans' love. She is remembered not just as an exceptional singing actress, but through

the medium of television as an emissary of opera to people who had little hope of experiencing it live in their far-flung small towns across America. She had a reputation for authenticity and graciousness, which she could project in her many public appearances, on talk shows and as a host of televised musical events. And many remember her as a consummate performer, admired for her resilience and trailblazing as an American artist who made her career at home, mainly on the stage of the 'people's' house, the New York City Opera.

The author offers critical caveats about Sills's voice in other places, and quotes newspaper critics to give a broader perspective. But in the end, much of this book paints a picture of fandom that could just as easily be directed at any other artist. This may reflect the basic tension Guy acknowledges between her own deep affection for Sills, and a commitment to write an 'academic' book. She has abstracted Sills into theoretical generalities in the interests of scholarship. But neither true scholarship nor true love of art is well served in the process. This would be a far better book if Guy had allowed herself more freedom from the constraints of academic fustian. **Philip Kennicott**

Classics RECONSIDERED



David Gutman and Jeremy Dibble discuss the 1972 EMI recording of *The Pilgrim's Progress* by Vaughan Williams



Vaughan Williams

The Pilgrim's Progress

Soloists; LPO and Choir / Sir Adrian Boult

Warner Classics ® 2 729126-2

From HMV SLS959

When it comes to the performers, first credit must go of course to John Noble as Pilgrim. Before the concert performance at the Festival Hall which preceded this recording, I was doubtful whether Noble would convey the right stature through this long, often unsupported part. His finely projected singing in the concert readily convinced me, and here he adds an extra dimension, as his very first agonised cries of 'What shall I do?' demonstrate. It is not so obviously expressive a voice as, say, John Shirley-Quirk's (here a magnificent Watchful) but Pilgrim needs above all to be

forthright, and Noble consistently lives up to his surname. As Christopher Bishop, the recording manager, mentions, Noble's first experience of the role was as a very young singer in Cambridge (his success then altered his whole career) and it is a part with which plainly he identifies. The firmness of focus is a constant joy to the ear.

The cast list is so long that I cannot hope to mention everyone, but where at the Festival Hall my impression was of an uneven band, the whole team under recording conditions seems to have become tautly consistent. I have already mentioned Shirley-Quirk (who was unable to take part in the concert), and others I would single out include Ian Partridge as the Interpreter; Raimund Herinx as John Bunyan (also inconsistently cast as Lord Hate-Good

at Vanity Fair); Sheila Armstrong as the psalm-singing bird of the Delectable Mountains; Gerald English and Gloria Jennings as Mister and Madam By-Ends; and Norma Burrowes and Alfreda Hodgson as Heavenly Beings at the end of Act 2. Robert Lloyd's ample-toned Apollyon is made the more fearsome by amplification along the lines of Fafner's dragon in the Decca *Ring*, a fine effect. My one serious disappointment is the rather prim Evangelist of John Carol Case.

The chorus – helped by Sir Adrian's tough words – sings with glorious focus and freshness all through, the London Philharmonic Orchestra is at peak form, and the recording captures the biggest ensembles with wonderful bloom.

Edward Greenfield (2/72)

David Gutman Unsure how or whether to pigeonhole Vaughan Williams's magnum opus, I've been wondering if Sir Adrian Boult's 1972 recording might have achieved its 'classic' status by default. I love it but then for years there was no other way to experience the music. First produced at Covent Garden for the Festival of Britain in 1951, *The Pilgrim's Progress* was, as we know, something of a flop. Even ENO's 2012 show, the first professional staging in London since that time, seems to have left more doubts than Richard Hickox's more frugal revivals or the early-1990s Royal Northern College of Music production (which I didn't catch). Does that make it a problem piece? Could it be that for all its glories, not least the casting of John Noble (for whom participation in the composer-approved 1954 Cambridge student production under Boris Ord proved a life-changing experience), Boult's achievement is patchier than we thought?

Jeremy Dibble I must say I have a soft spot for Boult's interpretation, and the recording seems to me to be the climax of that marvellous crescendo of symphony recordings he made in the late 1960s and early 1970s with EMI. Yes, John Noble is superb, and particularly, I think, for the lyrical bent to his singing. This is less well suited to others works. I'm thinking, for example, of his *Sea Drift* which, for all its euphony, is too lyrical for the pain and melancholy that Delius projects. In *Pilgrim's Progress* his soft tone (and that of John Carol Case, too) lends itself to that diatonic transparency quintessential to so much of the score's pastoral character.

DG Noble's identification with the role is almost painfully complete and that touch of something lachrymose in the timbre becomes an asset, but I can't help wishing we had a souvenir of Hickox's live performances with Roderick Williams

whose earnest understatement was, I think, even more convincing. (Gerald Finley in the Hickox recording is the strongest vocally but the intensity is somehow more generalised, for all the variety in the actual sound.) Interesting that you should single out John Carol Case who, I'd say, exemplifies the opposite kind of difficulty, evoking a particular time and place and attitude that would be less evident were he singing in German! I'm sure younger listeners will feel his Evangelist sounds like a bored vicar from an Ealing comedy.

JD Yes, perhaps. The sounds of John Carol Case and, for that matter, John Shirley Quirk (Watchful), do 'date' the recording a little, but for all that, they can never be faulted for their precision and intonation. Besides the interesting and illustrative additional disc of rehearsal excerpts, one of the other things on the recording is the spectacular playing of the LPO, especially



Sir Adrian Boult, Raimund Herincx, Ian Partridge and Gloria Jennings at the November 1970 recording session for *The Pilgrim's Progress*

so much of the limpid string playing in the 'Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains'. This, I think, is some of the most personal music (and arguably the best) of the entire opera and definitely conveys that sense of 'glow' which EG alludes to elsewhere in his 1972 *Gramophone* review. Do you not also feel that Boult's professional and collegial link with VW is of tangible value here?

DG I do agree about the 'Shepherds', so I was fascinated to read elsewhere in that issue that producer Christopher Bishop considered the scene 'a bit long, with its herbal shopping list'. I'm always reduced to tears not just by its glimpses of heaven and the sturdy, unsentimental affirmation appended to it, but by the way the agnostic VW lets in darker, more sceptical sonorities as the vision fades and we are left with Raimund Herincx's Bunyan alone on stage. This isn't Messiaen's *Saint François* after all, though it might be *Parsifal*. How wonderfully Boult balances those climactic Alleluias (Hickox and his team fail to highlight the totemic Tallis element) and yet the radiant, distancing quiet of the Epilogue somehow caps everything else. As a homecoming it's gloriously done but what about those parts of the score that don't share its slow inner momentum?

JD I don't think we should blame Boult for the inherent problems of the piece. It's evident that VW had misgivings about the very same things – the lack of hero, love duets and so on, which normally punctuate a successful operatic canvas. The interesting thing is that VW clearly experimented with operatic forms – *Hugh the Drover* as 'ballad opera' and *The Poisoned Kiss* as something of a burlesque in the way it fluctuates between pantomime and serious opera – yet *Pilgrim's Progress* lacks that true operatic syntax. I also wonder if the more malignant sections lack that edge which is achieved so magnificently in, say, *Job*. There, the relationship between contrasting ideas is more genuinely symphonic. However, it is wonderful to hear the various thematic elements of the radiant Fifth Symphony in this even more numinous context.

DG Well...having experienced the work in other contexts I do feel we can attribute certain shortcomings to the recording itself. First and foremost there's the diffidence of the conductor. Boult's VW may or may not have been authentic but it could be sluggish in later years and to my ears the LPO winds can be a good deal less perspicacious than the strings. Surely 'Vanity Fair' need not be such a damp squib. Joseph Ward's Lord

Lechery is a corker but having Herincx reappear as Lord Hate-Good is an oratorio-ish economy without theatrical nous. At that 1954 Cambridge staging Ursula Vaughan Williams is supposed to have gone round loosening the top buttons of the ladies' blouses, and I feel the need for similar input here, for something lascivious and Ken Russell-ish, for all that the piece springs from a very different tradition.

JD *The Pilgrim's Progress* was a work enormously central to VW's life as a composer, yet I think he always knew somehow that it was not a work that was going to be immediately appealing, even by comparison with his other operas which have themselves maintained a more regular place in the repertoire. I still wonder whether his obsession with the ethical nature of Bunyan's text was something he inherited from Parry whose unsuccessful 'ethical oratorios' written between 1902 and 1908 ended up being a rather fallow part of his output. The trouble with Parry's works, for all the noble moments in them (as RO Morris once pointed out), is that they were too personal and too heterodoxical to make any dramatic impact. Human stories in opera (and in oratorio for that matter) tend to make a greater and more immediate impression, whereas ethical journeys like *Pilgrim's Progress* tend to be too abstract, and those epiphanies so imperative to drama – recognitions, realisations, discoveries and so on – are more difficult in something as moral as *Pilgrim's Progress*.

DG And yet – to contradict myself – isn't it just that sense of ethical odyssey that Boult gets so right? I'd hazard a guess that VW's 'morality' will eventually become more familiar to the general public than Bunyan's text. Perhaps it's already done so. And we haven't even touched on the way VW has given some of us an English identity we can be proud of. Perhaps that's what really matters about this classic set, more than the fact that it preserves a raft of fondly remembered singing talent.

JD Sure. And this landmark recording will always enjoy the status of being an important historical milestone in the recordings of VW and our understanding of his larger output. Equally important too, I might suggest, its very existence also enabled us to appreciate the work without the distraction of the stage and costumes, allowing it to be enjoyed, studied and admired as work of the spiritual imagination, arguably the very thing Vaughan Williams intended all along. **G**

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

Water music

Music is the perfect artistic vehicle for evoking water, and in his survey **Lindsay Kemp** comes up with a fascinating mix to whet your appetite – including floods, oceans, rivers, fountains and even ice

No, not Handel! This is a guide to music inspired by water, not to music that happened to be performed in a boat. The latter category really could be a wide one, but of real water music there is still plenty. After all, what better medium could there be than music to represent this elusive element in all its restless singing, moany depths, glistening light-play, shimmering shape-shifts and subtle repetitions? Poetry and painting come nowhere near it.

True, the unruly freedom of water was something that proved largely beyond the capture (or desire) of Renaissance composers, despite their frequent recourse to it as a symbol. You might get some liquid running figures in a madrigal such as

Morley's *Hard by a crystal fountain*, but such allusions are aimed more at the mind than at the ear. The Baroque and Classical ages found a manner more vivid: think of the murmuring stream that eases the shepherd boy's slumber in Vivaldi's 'Spring', the raindrops that beat the windowpane in 'Winter', the countless operatic simile arias in which emotional turmoil is likened to the tempests that threaten ships at sea, the towering sea storms of French *tragédie lyrique*, the witty tone pictures of Haydn, or the undulations of the 'Scene by the Brook' in Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony.

After that, there was little holding back. In the 19th and 20th centuries the richly changeable colourings of the symphony orchestra and the glittering precision

of the piano have both proved ideal for depictions of water. Romantics have used the orchestra to suggest the grandeur and depth of river and ocean – in Schumann's *Rhenish* Symphony, say, or Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony*; impressionists have found the piano ideally suited to the quicksilver delicacy of fountain, stream and shower, whether in Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* and 'Ondine', for instance, or Debussy's 'Jardins sous la pluie' and 'Reflets dans l'eau'; and the myriad voices of water have provided rich material for practitioners of electronica and *musique concrète*, as in Hugh Le Caine's *Dripsody* (1955) or Takemitsu's *Water Music* (1960). Like the mesmerising quality of a tide or a waterfall, the fascination of water seems unlikely to lose its power. **G**



The Norwegian Terje Isungset uses frozen water to construct instruments on which to perform his music...and in a studio made of ice, of course!

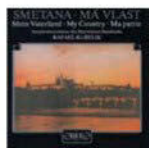
PHOTOGRAPHY: EMILE HOLBA

**Falvetti****Il diluvio universale**

Soloists, Namur Chamber Choir, Cappella Mediterranea / Leonardo García Alarcón

Ambronay (3/12)

This little-known oratorio by a little-known Baroque composer from Sicily, Michelangelo Falvetti, contains some of the most remarkable descriptive music of its time. The dramatic high point of this account of Noah and the Flood, composed in 1682, is when irresistible orchestral waves overwhelm a chorus of terrified drowning souls, their shouts and complaints dying out in submerged syllables and broken, unresolved harmony.

**Smetana****Má vlast - Vitava**

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra / Rafael Kubelík
Orfeo (5/85)

The standout work in Smetana's tone-poem cycle celebrating his homeland follows the course of the great Bohemian river from trickling source to fast-flowing rapids to stately entry into the Elbe. As it passes by rocks, castles, weddings and Prague itself, its lively progress is underpinned by a flowing musical undercurrent, reassuring us that this river - no less than any other - just keeps on rolling along.

**Britten****Four Sea Interludes (from Peter Grimes)**

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Sir Andrew Davis

Apex (8/91, 10/01)

Britten lived most of his life by the sea, and in 1945 he made it a brooding presence in his first opera, set in a Suffolk fishing town. So compellingly evocative are the four orchestral interludes he devised for it - depicting, respectively, a swell under a grey dawn, a bracing Sunday morning, moonlight glints on the waves and an alarming storm - that they are probably his most popular concert pieces.

**Telemann****Hamburger Ebb' und Flut**

Zefiro / Alfredo Bernardini

Ambroisie

Also known as *Wassermusik*

(TWV55:C3), this 10-movement suite is the watery wonderland that Handel's piece should have been. It was composed for an anniversary dinner at the Hamburg Admiralty in 1723 and not only draws with typical humour and skill on a goodly fellowship of sea deities, but also pictures the mighty swell of the sea in its overture and, with charming simplicity and effectiveness, the rise and fall of the city's drainage system.

**Liszt****Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este**

Hélène Grimaud *pf*

DG (3/16)

Liszt featured watery subjects several times in his *Années de pèlerinage* suites, but it is the pellucidly rippling poetic stream with which he represented the garden fountains of a Roman villa (in the third suite: S163) that has left the deepest impression. Composed in 1877 and sometimes cited as the first piece of musical impressionism, its influence on the glinting pianistic water play of Debussy and Ravel is impossible to miss.

**Mendelssohn****The Hebrides**

London Symphony Orchestra /

Sir John Eliot Gardiner

LSO Live (1/15)

Mendelssohn wrote down the opening theme of this musical memoir of a visit to the Western Isles on the spot, though it took a revision or two to prevent the resulting tone-poem from reeking 'more of counterpoint than of train oil, seagulls and salted cod' (to quote the composer in a letter to his sister Fanny in 1832). Yet that gently rolling melodic outline and atmospheric accompaniment surely conjures as instant a vision of the sea as anyone could hope for.

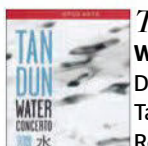
**Szymanowski****The Fountain of Arethusa (from Mythes, Op 30)**

Alina Ibragimova *vn*

Cédric Tiberghien *pf*

Hyperion (7/09)

Impressionistic in tone but typically animated by Szymanowski's fascination with literature and mythology, this portrait of the water nymph who has been transformed into a fountain marries babbling Ravelian piano textures to an airborne violin line of the highest melodic refinement. Delicate but at the same time tensile, this is perhaps the most purely lyrical of all water pieces.

**Tan Dun****Water Concerto**

David Cossin, Rika Fujii,

Tamao Inano *perc*

Royal Stockholm PO / Tan Dun

Opus Arte DVD

Ritualistic and vibrant, Tan Dun's New York Philharmonic commission (1998) foregrounds a range of 'water percussion' techniques - water slapped, splashed, poured and acting upon traditional percussion - against a spare orchestral backdrop. Inspired by childhood experiences of a 'clean water' no longer to be found in the world, he creates a unique and intensely focused organic soundscape, reflecting on the 'tears of nature'.

**Isungset****Water**

Terje Isungset *ice perc*

Lena Willemark *voice*

Palle Mikkelborg *tpt*

All Ice Records

Terje Isungset's relationship to water is certainly close: the Norwegian's instruments - percussion, trumpet, horn and harp - are made from ice, making some performances a drippy race against time. In the seamless flow of his 2001 album 'Iceman Is' (recorded in an ice studio, naturally), he surrenders to the keen air of an environment unhurried by time. 'Nature is very strong', he says. 'It can do what we human beings cannot do.'

**Debussy**

La mer Concertgebouw Orchestra / Bernard Haitink Philips Duo (3/94)

There can be few who have failed to marvel at the sheer atmospheric and evocative brilliance of Debussy's three 'symphonic sketches' begun in France in 1903 and completed in Eastbourne two years later. Of the first, 'From Dawn till Noon on the Sea', Satie is supposed to have said that he particularly liked the bit between half past 10 and a quarter to 11, but his affectionate sarcasm does nothing to belittle the piece, and in any

case was unable to rise to the equally perfect second and third movements, 'Play of the Waves' and 'Dialogue of the Wind and Sea'. As deep, as powerful and as fascinating as the sea itself, Debussy's score is indeed a maritime vision of immense precision, yet so perfectly realised that only the music, not words, can articulate it. A gleaming masterpiece in which water meets its ideal artistic expression.

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Bach's Goldberg Variations

This extraordinary set places huge demands on the performer, which – as **Jed Distler** finds in his focus chiefly on recordings of the past 20 years – keyboard players have tackled in a fascinating variety of ways

According to the musicologist Christoph Wolff, we have no specific record of public performances of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (BWV988) until the late 19th and early 20th century. Dissemination in concert and on record by the pioneering harpsichordist Wanda Landowska certainly helped spread the word, along with the work of a handful of pianists such as Claudio Arrau, Rudolf Serkin, Eunice Norton and James Friskin. The work's popularity continued to grow, and the steadily increasing stream of recordings over the past two decades has pushed the total amount beyond 600. Gone are the days when a new recording or live performance is looked upon as a special event: today, the *Goldbergs* proliferate on disc in the manner of commonplace calling cards. Many artists seem to record the work not because they should, but because they can. Still, the number of significant harpsichord and piano versions that have entered the catalogue since *Gramophone's* last *Goldbergs* Collection (October 1996) – both new releases and important reissues – warrants a fresh comparative survey. Also included here are recordings not mentioned in 1996, as well as passing nods to some of the great recordings of the past.

GOLDBERGS GENESIS

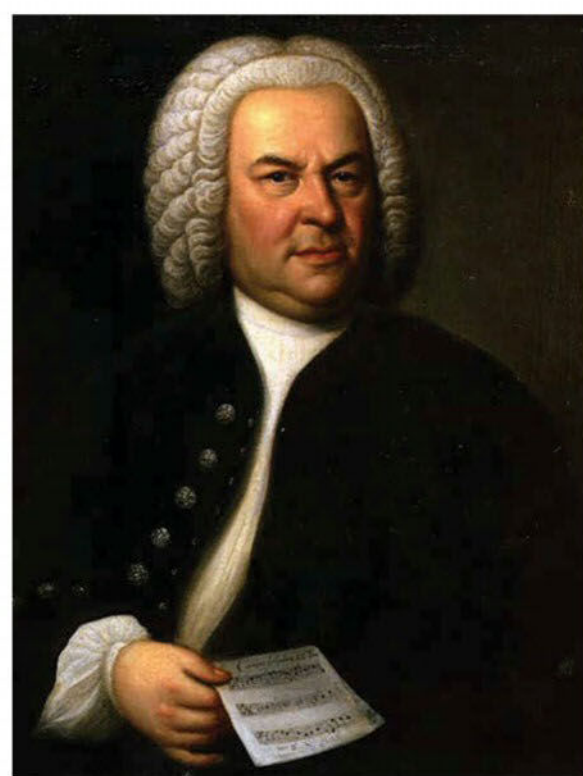
Legend has it that Bach received a commission to compose a set of variations aimed to ward off Count Hermann Carl von Keyserlingk's insomnia. During

sleepless nights, the count would summon his trusty teenage court harpsichordist Johann Gottlieb Goldberg to play through several variations. This story ultimately proved untrue, but that hasn't affected the *Aria with 30 Variations's* iconic status.

Loosely based on a G major aria from the second Anna Magdalena notebook, Bach's opening theme is anchored by a strong bass-line that provides the harmonic skeleton for each of the variations to follow. Bach organises the variations in 10 groups of three. Each group contains a variation specifically designed for the harpsichord's two keyboard manuals, a variation in free style and a strict two-voice canon. The canons are usually supported by an obbligato bass-line. However, the structure itself would hold little interest had Bach not filled it with some of his most imaginative, entertaining, technically challenging and profound keyboard writing.

RECORDINGS ON HARPSICHORD

Masaaki Suzuki is a scholarly, albeit interpretively unpredictable interpreter. You notice this right away in his more horizontally parsed, liberally ornamented *Aria*. His imaginative embellishments elsewhere enhance yet never obliterate character, even if he doesn't decorate canonic lines with congruent consistency. Suzuki imbues the virtuosic two-manual variations with little lifts that create provocative textural variety and melodic



Bach's Goldbergs: 600 recordings and counting

clarification. He takes all repeats, except for those in Variations 13, 15, 17, 25 and the *Aria da capo*.

Pierre Hantai's 2003 remake exhibits a more subjective, variegated and refined interpretative evolution from his superb *Gramophone* Award-winning traversal of 1992, notably in the repeats (he observes all but those in Variations 15, 25 and the *Aria da capo*, while 1992 gives full repeats save for Variation 25). Straightforward *legato* phrases are rethought in more inflected, *détaché* terms, while the two-manual variations are generally lighter and suppler. Yet there's an arch quality to Hantai's lingering on certain movements' first notes; or starting a first bar slowly, and gradually working up to tempo. Fussy phrasing also throws Variations 9, 23 and 30 askew, where Hantai's stop-and-start phrase shaping lacks the first traversal's continuity and flow. Furthermore, the German Jonte Knif harpsichord lacks the warmth and resonance of 1992's Dutch Bruce Kennedy model (compare Variation 14's strident, buzzing trills with their earlier counterparts, and you'll hear what I mean).

Philip Kennicott praised **Steven Devine's** Chandos recording (9/11) as one that can stand among the best in a crowded field, though he conceded instances of mannered accentuation, which, to my ears, impede the rhythmic flow (for example, the slight and sometimes predictable *ritardandos* at phrase ends). However, Devine is an unyielding martinet compared with



The title page of Bach's entertaining and profound 'Aria with 30 Variations'

Richard Egarr, in whose highly praised performance I frankly find little to enjoy. Most of Egarr's two-keyboard movements are laboured, homogenised in articulation (akin to Karajan's gooiest *legatos*) and utterly devoid of lilt. Listen, for example, to Variation 26's unstable dotted chords, or Variation 14's zigzagging patterns huffing and puffing uphill. In this context, Egarr's tough and terse Variation 25 proves an unexpected surprise. Give the

man credit for his imaginative ornaments on the repeats, and the compelling case he makes for authentic tuning and a correctly voiced instrument outfitted with correct plucking material.

However, if the kind of interpretation that Egarr offers holds interest, consider instead the greater shapeliness and specificity of **Blandine Rannou's** comparably slow tempos, liberal *rubatos* and rhetorical fancies, even if her ornaments occasionally

go over the top. Her seamless *legato* finger technique tells in the two-manual variations and slower movements in particular, creating a wealth of colours from her Anthony Sidey French model, enhanced by robustly resonant and detailed engineering. It may not be a *Goldbergs* performance for every taste, yet Rannou's ability to realise her intentions with such visionary consistency forces you to pay full attention.

Celine Frisch also uses a Sidey instrument that is exceptionally well recorded. Her technique and musicianship match Rannou's sophistication, but her livelier tempos and forthright flexibility prove more direct and less rarified as she dislodges the music from the proverbial pedestal. Her impressive control brings uncommon translucency to rapid lines moving in close proximity (Variation 11, for example), while accompanimental patterns are both steady and lilting at the same time: no 'sewing-machine' Bach here! And while there are ornaments aplenty, they somehow slip by without drawing attention to themselves.

If the above interpretations strive for unity, **Christine Schornsheim** appears to view each variation as a separate entity, with uneven results. Her matter-of-fact dispatch of Variations 2, 5, 8, 9, 12, 14 and 24 contrast with the highly energised 1, 4, 13, 19 and 22. The two-manual Variations 17 and 23 trade in the usual bravura for savvy linear interplay between the hands. If Variation 29 never quite gets off the ground, Schornsheim's measured tempo allows wiggle room for ornamentation, and she fills in each section's opening octaves with chords on the repeats. Given Schornsheim's excellent *Das wohltemperirte Clavier* released in 2012, I expected more.

Andreas Staier achieves characterful diversity with more success, partly by exploiting his harpsichord's wide variety of registers. An unadorned lute stop, for example, enhances the canon at the fifth's desolate introspection; and full-throated doublings in the French overture pump up the music's inherent pomp. The two-manual variations employ a different registration for each keyboard – an unorthodox yet admittedly effective gambit. Musically speaking, Staier is predictably unpredictable: Variations 2 and 11 are uncharacteristically laid-back and *legato*-ridden; Variation 27 is brisk and carefree; Variation 6 is driving and businesslike; and the minor key variations are brashly rhapsodic. You might chalk up Staier's *Goldbergs* as harpsichord versions for those who don't like the harpsichord.

However, for extroversion, imagination, audacity, blood and guts, stylish flair and



Andreas Staier: characterful diversity, and predictably unpredictable

pure entertainment value all rolled into one, you can't beat **Igor Kipnis**. He begins the Aria without ornamentation (Kipnis confessed to me that he stole the idea from Wilhelm Kempff's piano recording!). Soon he starts to pull decorative bunnies out of a bottomless magic hat, all of it laced unexpected accents and agogic stresses that propel rather than impede the musical flow. What is more, his rhythmic licence yields more proportioned and less apparently wilful results in comparison with Staier's, exemplifying what Virgil Thomson liked to call 'the discipline of spontaneity'. One can access it via digital download, though I fervently hope that Warner Classics will reissue the Kipnis *Goldbergs* and all of his other EMI releases in a comprehensive box-set.

PIANO SUCCESSES

When it comes to Bach on the piano, **Glenn Gould** and the *Goldberg Variations* remain synonymous through his iconic 1955 debut and valedictory 1981 version. One can nitpick over details, such as the 1955 opening Aria's basic pulse winding down over time, but Gould's unique rhythmic acuity and dry-point timbre still

helped knock the work off its hallowed pedestal, and made the music fun, probably for the first time since 1742.

By contrast, **Rosalyn Tureck** (who strongly influenced Gould) was anything but fun, musically speaking. A colleague of mine quipped that upon Tureck's demise in 2003, Bach tempos worldwide suddenly got 10 per cent faster! Yet the reissue of this pianist's 1957 studio EMI *Goldbergs* reveals the full measure of her extraordinary finger independence, minutely calibrated tonal gradations, pinpoint *staccatos* and genius for contouring contrapuntal lines and following them through to their final destination. Her interpretation focuses on abstract structure and ideals rather than musical character per se, and not all listeners will 'get' Tureck at first or second hearing. Indeed, it took me years to grasp the multilayered craft and unswerving integrity behind Tureck's iconoclastic, airtight conception.

Maria Tipo occupies the opposite end of the interpretative spectrum: she's impulsive, subjective and pianistically orientated. Tipo makes points not through ornamentation but through highlighting subsidiary voices, lingering on choice notes and causing mischief with dynamics and

pedal effects. She also takes textual liberties, such as doubling Variation 23's bass-line in octaves and playing Variation 17's right hand an octave higher than written. Purists may run for the hills, yet you can't dismiss such technically sophisticated, organically musical, red-blooded and freewheeling artistry.

András Schiff's 1982 *Goldbergs* were the first on piano to divert attention away from the buzz surrounding Gould's remake – by virtue of their superior tonal differentiation in the cross-handed movements, ear-catching embellishments and octave transpositions, plus Schiff's unusual approach to grouping larger sets of variations. His live 2001 ECM remake is more conventional and refined by comparison. To be sure, certain details proliferate to the detriment of the music's momentum and inner logic, as in Variations 26, 28 and 29; here I prefer Schiff's younger, more direct self. And sometimes his sudden *diminuendos* and tendency to accelerate up to tempo within a variation's first bar are a mite precious. Live performances and broadcasts from recent seasons have revealed further interpretative evolution and a new-found sense of 'sophisticated simplicity' that may warrant yet another 'official' recording.

Likewise, **Angela Hewitt's** *Goldbergs* continue to evolve, although she was playing them quite well at the time of her 1999 Hyperion recording. Her limpid technique and natural polyphonic command allow the music to sing, speak and breathe. The spirit of the dance governs her tempo choices, making it easy to digest tumultuous note traffic clogging up faster variations, abetted by the pianist's wide palette of inflections. But she doesn't really let loose until Variation 29, demonically diving into the chest-beating chords and spiralling passagework. For this reason, I'm more drawn to the greater sense of fantasy and risk in her live performances of the work, and I look forward to her December 2015 studio remake (still to be released).

My American colleague David Hurwitz hit the nail on the head when he observed

THE ENTERTAINER

Igor Kipnis, harpsichord Seraphim D 574501-2
Great performances, like great art, must be entertaining even as they instruct. Under Kipnis's wily watch, the *Goldberg Variations*



become a colourful epic, a banquet for the ears supervised by an erudite, infinitely interesting, charismatic, funny and generous host.

THE HIGH PRIESTESS

Rosalyn Tureck, piano EMI 509647-2

With a brain in every finger, Tureck leaves no note, phrase, accent or tone colour to chance. The pianism is as complex, multilevelled and



worked out as the music itself, and you can't listen to her casually, any more than you can claim to dabble in a serious practice like meditation or neurosurgery.

THE HARPSICHORD REFERENCE

Céline Frisch, harpsichord Alpha ALPHA303

Abetted by a dulcet and responsive period instrument, Frisch brings impressive technical sophistication, consistent



musicality and scholarship without pedantry or mannerism to a lively, thoughtfully structured and gorgeously engineered interpretation.

that **Murray Perahia** never sacrifices clarity for the sake of pianistic effect, yet is perfectly willing to employ pianistic effect for the sake of enhancing clarity, both contrapuntally and expressively. Many cogent examples throughout Perahia's glorious *Goldbergs* bear this out. For instance, few other pianists give shape to the canon at the octave's lilting melodic core, pointing up its resemblance to *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*; while the minor-key canon at the seventh conveys both conversational fluidity and reserve. Similarly, the repeats offer embellishments and changes of voicing or emphasis that make musical and expressive sense. Listen to Variation 8's bassoon-like bass-line to the fore the first time around, and then, on the repeat, both hands singing equally out loud. In addition, Perahia's debonair way with the faster movements consistently brings out the music behind the surface bravura. This is Bach pianism and intelligent music-making of the highest order, and rehearing Perahia's recording of the *Goldbergs* only enhances its long-held reference status.

MORE PIANO OPTIONS

Among the handful of less celebrated reference-worthy contenders, **Ekaterina Dershavina's** 1994 recording is the proverbial sleeper. Her well-unified tempos from one variation to the next are buoyant yet never feel too fast for either playing or listening comfort, and she embellishes repeats with taste and discretion. Articulation, dynamic scaling and contrapuntal contouring are governed by musical considerations and a logical melodic trajectory. While Dershavina largely avoids the sustain pedal, she employs it for momentary coloration of *legato* lines and expressive enhancement. Her sharp ear for differentiating sustained and detached part-writing yields lovely results, such as in Variation 15, where the *legato* canon lines and short left-hand notes evoke two wind instruments supported by a *pizzicato* cello. In short, Dershavina's shapely, intimately scaled and enlivening Bach pianism is built to last.

Two pianists from the next generation garnered considerable attention for their respective recordings. **Simone Dinnerstein's** sudden rise to prominence reads like a fairy tale: unknown pianist records the *Goldbergs* at her own expense, Telarc picks it up, the CD sells like hot cakes and a star is born. Her serious-minded interpretation hits and misses, with tempos generally locking in at fast or slow extremes. Her slow playing leaves a dour and tedious impression, blurring the thin line that separates



András Schiff diverted attention from Glenn Gould; his own interpretation continues to evolve

self-effacement and self-denial. Sundry rhythmic distensions, dynamic dips and breaking of hands sound mincing rather

than expressive. Yet much is brilliantly thought out and executed: the two-manual variations feature exemplary voice-leading

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS		RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
Piano		
1955	Glenn Gould	Sony (B) 88697 80606-2; (B) COLSMK52594; (S) (2) 88725 41182-2 (4/93*)
1957	Rosalyn Tureck	EMI (M) (2) 509647-2 (2/58*)
1981	Glenn Gould	Sony (M) COLSMK52619; (S) (2) 88725 41182-2 (8/93*)
1982	András Schiff	Decca (F) 417 1162 (1/84*)
1986	Maria Tipo	EMI/Warner (S) (2) (B) 381745-2 (9/00*)
1994	Ekaterina Dershavina	Arte Nova (S) 74321 34011-2
1999	Angela Hewitt	Hyperion (F) CDA67305 (4/00)
2000	Alexander Paley	Blüthner (M) (2) (B) CD2004PA02
2000	Murray Perahia	Sony (B) SK89243 (12/00)
2001	András Schiff	ECM (F) 472 1852
2005	Simone Dinnerstein	Telarc (F) CD80692 (A/07)
2012	Jeremy Denk	Nonesuch (F) 7559 79586-9 (11/13)
2014	Tzimon Barto	Capriccio (F) C5243 (8/15)
2015	Lori Sims	Two Pianists (F) TP1039244
2015	Lars Vogt	Online (F) ODE1273-2 (A/15)
2015	Alexandre Tharaud	Erato (B) (2) (CD + DVD) 2564 60517-7 (11/15)
2015	Igor Levit	Sony (B) (3) 88875 06096-2 (11/15)
Harpsichord (except where indicated)		
1973	Igor Kipnis	Seraphim (M) (2) (B) 574501-2
1988	Scott Ross	Virgin (F) 561869-2 (7/89*)
1992	Pierre Hantaï	Naïve (M) NC40029 (4/94*)
1994	Christine Schornsheim	Capriccio (M) (2) C10577
1997	Masaaki Suzuki	BIS (F) BIS-CD819 (3/98)
2002	Céline Frisch	Alpha (B) (2) ALPHA303 (09/02)
2003	Pierre Hantaï	Mirare (F) MIR9945 (4/04)
2005	Richard Egarr	Harmonia Mundi (M) (2) HMU90 7425/6 (6/06)
2005	Jürgen Sonnenthel <i>org</i>	CPO (M) (2) CPO777 215-2
2009	Andreas Staier	Harmonia Mundi (F) HMC90 2058 (6/10)
2010	Steven Devine	Chandos (F) CHAN0780 (9/11)
2010	Blandine Rannou	Zig-Zag Territoires (F) (2) ZZT111001 (4/12)
2012	Michael Tsalka <i>clav</i>	Paladino (F) PMR0032

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'Technically transcendent and deeply moving': Murray Perahia, master of the *Goldbergs*

and timbral distinction between hands; and the Fughetta plus the canons at the sixth, the octave and the ninth swing with character. Dinnerstein repeats certain variations in full, others in part, and a few not at all. A dedicated pianist is at work, if not always at play.

If Dinnerstein works the 'sensitive artist' angle to a fault, then **Jeremy Denk** aspires to be the Charles Rosen of his generation – a musical and intellectual lightning rod. His *Goldbergs* include programme notes in the form of a DVD lecture/demo, where Denk sits at the piano and offers witty, concise and provocative observations about the music. Denk's interpretation is equally stimulating. Notice, for example, Variation 4's deft, three-dimensional voice-leading, Variation 11's playfully accented cross-rhythms, and his mobile, *alla breve* treatment of Variation 15. But there are mannered moments too, such as in the Quodlibet's artificial agogic stresses, and in frequent *subito pianos* and tapered phrases. Long stretches of detached articulation, such as in Variation 24's left hand, lack sufficient variety. And why the sudden speeding up when Variation 20's triplets commence?

Essentially **Lars Vogt's** *Goldbergs* are Denk's parked in neutral and dipped in porridge-like textures – an impression enhanced by excessive reverberation. For all of Vogt's formidable technical acumen, he curiously underplays variations like Nos 14, 26 and 29 that usually benefit from virtuosic ebullience and thrust, while he shortchanges the rhythm at times in the Fughetta's 'A' section. The minor key variations, however, are gorgeously fleet and flexible.

Many young pianists would be happy to claim the sensitive, polished and inherently musical pianism distinguishing **Igor Levit's** *Goldbergs*. He briskly navigates the two-keyboard variations without them sounding driven or pushed, while slower, lyrical ones are eloquently understated. Comparative listening, however, finds Levit's dynamic and articulation palettes coming up short alongside Perahia's sophisticated voice leading and more varied, pinpointed execution all around. In fairness, Levit's recent live performances have displayed a higher level of engagement and absorption.

SURPRISES...AND ODDITIES

Although strong character types (eccentric Gould, high priestess Tureck, arcane and erudite Egarr, Cinderella Dinnerstein, smartest-guy-in-the-room Denk) dominate the *Goldbergs* beat, a live recording by the relatively underpublicised and unpretentious **Lori Sims** is worthy of top billing. Her opening *Aria* alone signifies the naturally singing style, imaginative phrasing, delicious ornaments and original insights to unfold over the next 80 minutes. Her line-orientated *rubato* emerges with the utmost naturalness (listen to Variation 9's shapely, cello-like left hand), while tiny hesitations at the top of Variation 25's phrases enhance the music's questioning profile and melodic depth. Whereas many focus on Variation 14's trills, Sims instead zeros in on countermelodies hidden within the motoric accompaniment. Her hands are equally adept and proudly independent in the cross-handed variations. And a long

silence capping the *Aria da capo* is followed by hearty, well-deserved applause.

Likewise, **Alexandre Tharaud** doesn't need a pose or a persona to sell his *Goldbergs*. Although he's obviously scrutinised the music with a fine-tooth comb, he basically hangs loose and flies free, letting detailed niceties fall into place without sounding the least bit self-aware, giving a real, honest-to-God performance that imbues each variation with its own personality. Even the audacious 'effects' hold up under repeated scrutiny, such as Variation 29's grandiose octave reinforcements, or the unorthodox elongation of Variation 16's opening chord as if it were a fanfare. Few modern-day studio recordings sound so live and soulful.

For dead and doleful, though, **Alexander Paley's** laborious schlep adds up to 105 painful minutes across two CDs, while **Tzimon Barto's** high-camp vulgarity makes Liberace look like Leonhardt by comparison. Also, avoid **Michael Tsalka's** crude and choppy attempt to scale the *Goldbergs'* challenges on two clavichords, and Wilhelm Middelschulte's garish, sludgy organ arrangement rendered virtually unlistenable thanks to organist **Jürgen Sonnentheil's** chronic lack of rhythmicity here.

Two vintage rediscoveries ultimately emerge close to the forefront. Voting with my head, Tureck in her prime remains *sui generis* and a shrine in every sense of that word. But I vote with my heart in order to spread the joy of Igor Kipnis throughout the world. For a modern-day harpsichord version where scholarship and enlivening music-making coalesce, Celine Frisch is in a class by herself. When Murray Perahia's recording first appeared, I paraphrased the late TV host Steve Allen's response to jazz pianist Art Tatum, writing that piano versions of this work may become different in the future, but they're not going to get better. Through Perahia's technically transcendent, intelligently proportioned and deeply moving interpretation Bach's *Goldberg Variations* rarely have sounded so completely at one with the modern concert grand. **G**

THE TOP CHOICE

Murray Perahia, piano Sony SK89243
Perahia's intelligent musicality, refined pianism, astute sense of architecture and emotional engagement make the *Goldbergs* sound



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PLAYLISTS

Explore tantalising music for wind ensemble and the recorder via our themed playlists

Shape-shifting wind music

Philip Clark looks at works inspired by the timbral possibilities of wind instruments

In this issue's Musician and Score, Trevor Pinnock enthuses about the *Gran Partita*, Mozart's inventive writing for a 13-piece wind ensemble continually catching him by surprise. Whether any of the composers included here consciously modelled anything after Mozart's groundbreaking work is arguable; but all this exploratory music finds something fresh and wonderful from within the shape-shifting timbral possibilities of wind instruments.

Berlioz's *Grande symphonie funèbre et triomphale* (1840) was apparently cut-and-pasted together in a couple of days from bottom-drawer sketches, mainly because Berlioz was indecently keen to bank his commission fee – but his fascination with wind sonority is clear for all to hear. Kagel aimed the satire of his caustic *10 Marches to Miss the Victory* at precisely the sort of triumphalist nationalism Berlioz was evoking – a wickedly funny burlesque.

Holst's Suite was the first through-composed piece for military band, a British institution that had hitherto lent heavily on transcription, while Finnissy's *Giant Abstract Samba* is the nearest he's come to creating an *Ebony Concerto*. The Stravinsky, Messiaen and Xenakis works, meanwhile, repurpose longstanding harmonic and timbral obsessions, their music overriding what lesser composers might consider to be a reduced orchestral palette. This is visionary music that, like Mozart's, just happens to be for winds.

- **Berlioz** *Grande symphonie funèbre et triomphale* Cologne Great Symphonic Brass / Fritz Straub **Naxos**
- **Finnissy** *Giant Abstract Samba* Michael Norsworthy *c/* NEC Wind Ensemble / Charles Peltz **New Focus**
- **Xenakis** *Akrata* Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg / Arturo Tamayo **Timpani**
- **Hindemith** *Symphony in B flat* Westfälisches Sinfonieorchester / Huber Reichert **BNF Collection**
- **Stravinsky** *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* BPO / Simon Rattle **Warner Classics**
- **Messiaen** *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum* SWR SO Baden-Baden / Sylvain Cambreling **Hänssler Classics**

- **Schoenberg** *Theme and Variations* United States Air Force Concert Band / Lowell Graham **Altissimo**
- **Milhaud** *Suite française* BPO / Sergiu Celibidache **Audite**
- **Holst** *First Suite* Eastman Wind Ensemble / Donald Hunsberger **Sony**
- **Kagel** *10 Marches to Miss the Victory* HR Brass / Lutz Köhler **Capriccio**

Recorder revelations

Charlotte Gardner explores the current champions of the recorder repertoire

How things change. Suddenly the recorder is being recognised fully for the paradise of tones, ranges and stylistic wizardry associated with it, whether in early and Baroque music or in the many contemporary pieces now being inspired and commissioned by its players. It's been a slow burn, but the trailblazing of luminaries such as Michala Petri and Marion Verbruggen has produced a crop of exciting young talent that's now very much hitting the mainstream.

Italian Baroque works performed by Maurice Steger begin and end the playlist: an ear-popping piece of Vivaldi recorder pyrotechnics performed on descant recorder and a darker-hued Sinfonia for alto by the Neapolitan composer Nicola Fiorenza. Solo works in the playlist come in the shape of Jacob van Eyck's exquisite *English Nightingale*, performed by Marion Verbruggen, and Telemann's *Fantasia No 3*, its overarching lines beautifully carved out by Dorothee Oberlinger. Then, recorder doyenne Michala Petri has recorded a tremendous amount of highly contrasting new music in recent years, represented here by Daniel Kidane's *Tourbillon* (2014) and Anders Koppel's *Concerto for Recorder, Saxophone and Orchestra* (2010). Meanwhile, the towering contemporary music champion of the younger crowd is Erik Bosgraaf; the one-movement Recorder Concerto Willem Jeths wrote for him in 2014 explores the instrument's capacity for melancholy, whilst the *Dialogues* for recorder and electronics Bosgraaf created with composer Jorrit Tamminga, in response to Boulez's work of the same name, show the recorder in yet another light. Then there's Tabea Debus: her performances place new music alongside Baroque, and it's the latter I've



Michala Petri: trailblazing recorder virtuoso

chosen here – a suite by Louis-Antoine Dornel. It's preceded by some good old woody early music textures in the form of a Marenzio madrigal performed by recorder consort Mezzaluna.

- **Vivaldi** *Concerto in G, RV443* Maurice Steger *rec* I Barocchisti / Diego Fasolis **Harmonia Mundi**
- **Van Eyck** *English Nightingale* Marion Verbruggen *rec* 1+1
- **Jeths** *Recorder Concerto* Erik Bosgraaf *rec* Netherlands Radio PO / Markus Stenz **Challenge Records**
- **Telemann** *Fantasia No 3* Dorothee Oberlinger *rec* Harmonia Mundi
- **Kidane** *Tourbillon* Michala Petri *rec* Mahan Esfahani *hpd* **OUR Recordings**
- **Koppel** *Concerto for Recorder, Saxophone and Orchestra* Michala Petri *rec* Benjamin Koppel *sax* Odense SO / Henrik Vagn Christensen **Dacapo**
- **Marenzio** *Nel più fiorito Aprile, a 6* Mezzaluna **Outhere**
- **Dornel** *Première Suite, Op 2* Tabea Debus *rec* with various artists **ClassicClips**
- **Tamminga** *Dialogues* Erik Bosgraaf *rec* Jorrit Tamminga *elec* **Brilliant Classics**
- **Fiorenza** *Sinfonia in A minor* Various artists / Maurice Steger *rec* **Harmonia Mundi**



The playlists for this feature were compiled in conjunction with

Qobuz, the music streaming service. You can listen at gramophone.co.uk/playlists

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Presenting live music-making and reviews of concerts available online, including Nielsen from Sweden, Mozart from Berlin and the music of the polymath Anthony Burgess

St John's College Chapel, Cambridge & BBC Radio 3

Evensong from St John's, Cambridge, April 27

The Choir of St John's, Cambridge, webcasts its services every week, and a couple of them are broadcast each year on BBC Radio 3, too. This service is rather a special one because the singers will be celebrating the 80th birthday of their former Director of Music, Christopher Robinson, by singing his introit *Jesu, grant me this, I pray*. Also on the service order is WH Harris's *Faire is the Heaven*.

sjchoir.co.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Metropolitan Opera, New York & cinemas worldwide

Richard Strauss's Elektra, April 30

Nina Stemme takes on the title-role in Strauss's modernist masterpiece in the last production created by the late Patrice Chéreau. Stemme is joined by the Wagnerian mezzo-soprano Waltraud Meier, singing Klytemnestra for the first time at the Met, along with other cast members Adrienne Pieczonka, Burkhard Ulrich and Erich Owens. Esa-Pekka Salonen conducts. metopera.org

Lighthouse, Poole; Colston Hall, Bristol; Exeter Cathedral & BBC Radio 3

Kirill Karabits conducts Mahler and Brahms, May 4, 5 & 7

The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra is led by its Chief Conductor Kirill Karabits in Mahler's Symphony No 1 alongside Brahms's Violin Concerto. The soloist for the concerto is Guy Braunstein, who in 2000 became the youngest person to be appointed Concertmaster of the Berlin Philharmonic. BBC Radio 3 broadcasts the concert live from Poole Lighthouse on May 4. The concert is then repeated in Bristol on May 5 and in Exeter on May 7.

bsolive.com; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Stadthalle Göttingen; Berlin Konzerthaus; Forum of Music Wrocław & NDR Kultur

Laurence Cummings directs Handel's Susanna, May 5, 7, 8 & 22

Under the artistic direction of Laurence Cummings, the International Handel Festival is one of the absolute highlights of the musical calendar for anyone with a love of the Baroque. Their oratorio for 2016 is Handel's *Susanna*, with American mezzo-soprano Emily Fons in the title-role, offering a rare chance to hear in Europe the singer for whom Jennifer Higdon created the role of Ruby Thewes in her

ONLINE CONCERT REVIEW

Carl Nielsen's Second Symphony from the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra

Nielsen

In 2014 we witnessed the Berlin Philharmonic feeling its way through Nielsen's Third Symphony under Alan Gilbert courtesy of the Digital Concert Hall, a performance that was nothing if not unidiomatic (still available to view, for the curious). Given its pedigree both in Nielsen's time (the composer enjoyed a stint as stand-in Music Director at the GSO) and on record today, the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra's offerings via its own streaming service GSO Play can be judged against a rather more stringent scale.

That the GSO has long mastered Nielsen's quirks shows in this performance of the Second Symphony under Johannes Gustavsson, recorded in February. The orchestra can flip from brittleness to lyricism without any fuss, one of the problem areas with Paavo Järvi's recent cycle on RCA (2/16). Gustavsson's temperament – physically and in the resulting sounds – is well attuned to Nielsen's own. The 'phlegmatic' *Allegro* floats along, shaped without being



distorted. The flat-landscaped 'melancholic' *Andante* is very broad indeed but the orchestra's tonal weight, with the added visual interest, brings it off.

The 'sanguine' finale balances swagger with bounce. The only black mark is for a general lack of oomph in the opening 'choleric' *Allegro*; couldn't the orchestra have deployed more muscle, and where's the cavorting bass trombone? That might have scuppered a CD recording, but there's plenty – free of charge – to enjoy here. **Andrew Mellor**

Available to view, at no cost, by visiting gsoplay.se/en

2015 Santa Fe Opera commission *Cold Mountain* (newly issued on Pentatone and to be reviewed next month). Also in the cast are countertenor Christopher Lowrey and tenor John Mark Ainsley. Cummings leads the FestspielOrchester Göttingen and the NDR Choir. After the May 5 festival performance they take it to Berlin's Konzerthaus (May 7) and Poland's National Forum of Music in Wrocław (May 8). NDR Kultur will broadcast the Göttingen performance on May 22. haendelfestspiele.de; ndr.de/kultur

The Hug and Pint, Glasgow & online Electric Clarinet, May 10

This pub concert is part of a new series called 'The Night With...', programmed by composer Matthew Whiteside, which aims to present old and brand-new classical music through informal, salon-style concerts. Joanna Nicholson is the

clarinetist, joined by Whiteside on electronics, and their programme will predominantly feature new music for clarinet with electronics, including Three Pieces for bass clarinet and electronics from Whiteside's recent disc 'Dichroic Light'. thenightwith.co.uk

National Centre for Early Music, York, BBC Radio 3 and online

The 2016 NCEM Young Composers Award finalists concert, May 12

The 2016 NCEM's Young Composers Award, held in partnership with BBC Radio 3 and lutenist Elizabeth Kenny's early music ensemble Theatre of the Ayre – with mezzo-soprano Anna Starushkevych and tenor Nicholas Mulroy – is open to young composers resident in the UK aged between 18 and 25. They are invited to write a new work for lute and either tenor or mezzo-

soprano which sets one of four selected poems by William Shakespeare and Carol Ann Duffy. The concert, which presents the finalists' works to a panel of judges who will announce the winners, is streamed live and will be recorded for broadcast at a later date on BBC Radio 3.

ncem.co.uk/composersaward2016

bbc.co.uk/radio3/earlymusicshow

Barbican, London & BBC Radio 3

Opera Rara and the BBC Symphony Orchestra perform Adelson e Salvini, May 11

Adelson e Salvini is Bellini's first opera, composed when he was 23 and studying in Naples. These days it's rarely performed, but it was this opera that led to Bellini's first professional commission, from Naples's Teatro di San Carlo. This concert performance presents the original version of the opera in a new critical edition with a cast featuring Simone Alberghini, Daniela Barcellona and Lawrence Brownlee; Daniele Rustioni conducts, in his first collaboration with Opera Rara. If you can't get to the Barbican, then watch out for the BBC Radio 3 broadcast, which will take place at some point between November and the end of January to tie in with Opera Rara's February release of the world-premiere studio recording of the piece.

operarara.com; bbc.co.uk/radio3

St John's Smith Square, London; Westminster Abbey & BBC Radio 3

London Festival of Baroque Music, May 13, 17

The London Festival of Baroque Music, under the artistic direction of Gramophone's own Lindsay Kemp, runs from May 13-19 this year with a theme of 'The Word', celebrating the

ONLINE CONCERT REVIEW

Try the DCH free in a Mozart concert

Mozart

The first time your reviewer saw Simon Rattle in concert was in a performance of Mozart's Symphony No 39. Notable then was the sheen on the CBSO's sound, if one felt that the glossy surface was hardly penetrated. It's all very well to play the notes, thought sallow student Threasher, but you have to go beyond that to reveal the music's secrets.

A quarter of a century later, a couple of hours' plane journey away, and Rattle's Mozart has truly come of age. The Digital Concert Hall offers this concert of the magnificent final trilogy of symphonies, and it's nothing less than a pleasure from start to finish. Of course, the Berlin Phil have been playing this music since time immemorial and could surely do it without a conductor, but then, Rattle hardly gives anything as vulgar as a beat. It's clear he's out to shape the music, to draw out what lies beneath, to offer that very revelation that was missing at the Barbican in 1990-something.

The sheen is still there, but you expect it from this of all orchestras, and it's hardly much use name-checking the unanimity of the strings or the perkiness of the



woodwind, for example. Fixed-angle cameras give ideal views, especially of the wind section (the version played of No 40 is the second, so you get clarinets as well as oboes), and linger often on Rattle himself, showing his (scoreless) involvement with the music and watching him practically dancing like a kid at a rave in, say, No 39's Trio. Some may baulk at his tapering-off of movement endings or certain holdings-back at cadential points, but Rattle's view of this music as he stands on the brink of Grand Old Manhood is compelling, individual and well worth a watch.

It'll cost you nought. **David Threasher**

Available to view, free of charge, at digitalconcerthall.com. Concerts and operas are available via various subscription packages, from seven days (€9.90) to 12 months (€149).

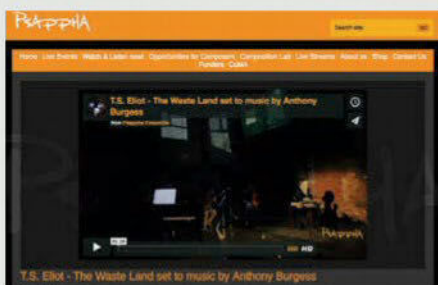
combined power of music and language. On May 13, St John's Smith Square hosts John Butt and the Dunedin Consort for a performance of the original 1742 Dublin version of Handel's *Messiah*, with soloists Joanne Lunn, Clare Wilkinson, Esther Brazil, Joshua Ellicott,

Matthew Brook and Robert Davies. Then, on May 17, Handel's oratorio *Israel in Egypt* will be performed in Westminster Abbey by the Choir of Westminster Abbey and St James's Baroque conducted by James O'Donnell.

lfbm.org.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

ONLINE CONCERT REVIEW

The European premiere of Anthony Burgess's setting of TS Eliot's *The Waste Land* performed by ensemble Psappha



Burgess

In the early 1980s BBC Two screened a quiz series entitled *The Book Game*. Hosted by Robert Robinson, it would be branded hopelessly elitist today, but back then such virtuoso intellectual prowess was admired, not derided, and watching the likes of Anthony Burgess and Frederic Raphael identifying passages of prose and poetry made for magnetic viewing.

Burgess's eclectic erudition surfaced in many different arenas; as well as being a novelist, he also wrote librettos and screenplays, made opera translations and was a composer of some accomplishment (I recall a rather fine musical version of James Joyce's *Ulysses* called *Blooms of Dublin*, from 1982). As his centenary approaches (next February), Manchester-based Psappha reminds us of Burgess's musical talent.

Burgess made his setting of TS Eliot's *The Waste Land* in 1978 and, amazingly, it received its European premiere as recently as 2014 – and that's the performance captured here. Scored for a quartet of flute, oboe, cello and piano with narrator and soprano, Burgess's musical adaptation has been staged by Elaine Tyler-Hall, filmed live at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation in Manchester.

Burgess draws on the myriad musical references embedded in Eliot's poem, and provides a counterpoint to the words (ranging from the atonal to a faux-musical-hall idiom), reflecting the 'collective shiver' (Burgess's words) that a first encounter with this great creation invariably provokes. The narrator Jonathan Best reads a long and typically erudite introduction by Burgess himself, before launching into the poem.

There are juxtapositions of real genius, such as the opening of *The Rite of Spring* underscoring the poem's first lines, not to mention numerous other musical quotations. Musically, the effect is of a collage that powerfully offers one great artist's response to the work of another.

James Jolly

Available to view, free of charge, at psappha.com

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The 9th Osaka International Chamber Music Competition & Festa

May 13-21, 2017

Chamber Music Competition May 13-21, 2017

- Age limit: **35 years old or younger**
- Performance Sections: Section I : *String Quartet*
Section II : *Wind Quintet, Saxophone Quartet and Brass Quintet*
- Jury: Tsuyoshi TSUTSUMI (Chairman), Martin BEAVER, Paul KATZ, Yoshiko KAWAMOTO, Honggang LI, Kazuki SAWA, Rainer SCHMIDT, Claude DELANGLE, Satoshi KAMIYA, Chang-Kook KIM, Michel LETHIEC, Philip SMITH, Radovan VLATKOVIĆ

Chamber Music Festa May 18-21, 2017

- Ensembles applying for the Festa should consist of two to six musicians.
- Any combination of instruments is acceptable.
- There is neither age limit nor a list of set pieces for the Festa.

■ **Deadline for application: October 20, 2016**

■ **Prizes to be awarded:** Total prizes 15,000,000 yen

Ten-concert engagement in Japan for the 1st prize winner of each category

■ **Financial support:** All overseas competitors will be provided with subsidy of airfares and accommodation.



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THIS MONTH A new compact system from a famous British name, a novel digital converter able to record LPs – and is one-box hi-fi the future?
Andrew Everard, Audio Editor

MAY TEST DISCS



This set of Bach cello transcriptions by Markku Luolaja-Mikkola has a demonstration-quality rich, warm sound in HD or CD, on Linn



Reference Recordings' releases usually live up to the company name and this set by the University of Texas Wind Ensemble is no exception

A time for revivals and arrivals

This month sees the return of a famous name with a great new range of products



The ever-changing fortunes of the hi-fi market mean that brands come to prominence, attract competition, slip back and then hopefully return to challenge again. That's definitely the case with Mission: once it was the brand to beat in the affordable speaker market, with models such as the classic 760 and 780, but of late it's been somewhat in the shade.

All that looks likely to change with the arrival of the new LX series, launched with the LX-2 standmount speakers at £200 per pair, and the £400/pr LX-3 floorstanders **1**. They're the work of a newly formed design team – although all the members have worked on past Mission projects – and are designed for 'maximum sonic expression with minimal compromise'. The LX-2 uses the familiar 'upside down' Mission driver layout, with the 13cm mid/bass unit above the 25mm tweeter, while the LX-3 adds a second mid/bass driver below the tweeter to create a D'Appolito configuration. The woofers use an advanced fibre composition to ensure they aren't affected by changes in ambient humidity, as well as being stiff and offering maximum self-damping, while the 'motor' uses a high-strength ferrite magnet to ensure accuracy and linearity. Both models come in black with a blue/grey front baffle, with other finishes to come along

with further models, including a smaller standmount speaker, the LX-1, two more floorstanders and a centre channel for home cinema use.

Also making something of a comeback is Pioneer, with two new stereo amplifiers: the £700 A-50D and the £1200 A-70D **2**. Both models use Class D power amplification, delivering 65W per channel into 8 ohms and 90Wpc into 4 ohms, while the use of the ESS Sabre32 Ultra DAC and an asynchronous USB input allows the amplifiers to handle PCM-based music formats up to 384kHz, as well as one-bit formats up to DSD256/11.2MHz. A three-chamber internal construction keeps the power, digital and analogue sections apart to minimise noise, while both amplifiers have a built-in phono stage – moving magnet in the A-50D, mm/mc in the A-70D. Other improvements for the more expensive model include a fully balanced pre-amp section complete with XLR inputs, separate shielded transformers for pre-amp and power amp stages, and a 'beefed-up' construction with stiffer chassis and side panels.

Another new amplifier arrival marks the 20th anniversary of the launch of the Audio Analogue Puccini, the model responsible for bringing the Italian company to worldwide attention. The new Puccini Anniversary, selling for £2999 and available in black or silver, delivers 83W into 8 ohms and up to 288W into 2 ohms, and is a dual-mono design using three pairs of power transistors for each

channel **3**. Designed by the company's in-house AirTech R&D department, the amplifier uses no global feedback in the quest for clarity and musicality, and has a multifunction control for power, input selection and volume control, this last function allowing the use of four volume 'curves' to suit speakers of differing sensitivity, provided by two digital potentiometers per channel.

Also new this month, and firmly part of a growing trend towards all-in-one systems – Musical Fidelity and Quad have similar products on the way – is the Moon Neo ACE **4**. Selling for £2500, it combines a streaming/network music player and integrated amplifier, with inputs including both USB with 384kHz/DSD256 capability and a moving magnet phono input for a turntable. Delivering 50W per channel, the Neo ACE has two further line inputs, four digital ins and aptX Bluetooth as well as Wi-Fi and Ethernet, and can be controlled using the company's MiND software on tablets and smartphones.

Finally, the British speaker company ATC has launched an active version of its floorstanding SCM19 speaker **5**. The SCM19AT is compact, standing less than a metre tall, and uses the company's 25mm soft-dome tweeter and 15cm mid/bass unit, here driven by internal amplification of 32W and 150W respectively. All of this is housed in an elegant, curved cabinet. The SCM19AT sells for £4990 a pair. **6**

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Quad Artera Play/Stereo

Innovative CD/DAC/pre-amplifier and high-quality stereo power amplifier

Without a doubt, Quad – now in its 80th-anniversary year – has more products for a wider range of users than ever before, and the Artera range is the latest addition to the catalogue. Combining the latest audio technology with styling from Rodney Mead, who was responsible for the industrial design of Quad products from the 1970s to the 1990s, the idea was to create what the company describes as ‘a Quad component range fit for 2016 and beyond’.

The initial offering is comprised of the two products we have here: the £1399 Artera Play CD player/DAC/pre-amplifier and the matching Artera Stereo power amplifier, which sells for £1499. Both have a distinctive look, very unlike either the Quad 77-derived Elite styling or the more flamboyant Platinum models. The two have a substantial textured aluminium front panel, available in either black or silver, along with a glass top-plate, while the enclosures are detailed with CNC-routed heatsinks to either side. Both have casework designed for vibration resistance, not least as a result of their sheer mass – despite the compact 32cm-wide dimensions, the Play weighs 8.5kg, with the Stereo power amplifier 15kg – and both feel impeccably designed and exceptionally well screwed-together.

The Artera style is set to grow in the Quad range: revealed a couple of months ago was the Artera One, following the ‘all-in-one’ trend seemingly sweeping the hi-fi industry at the moment. The new model will combine the functions of the Artera Play with network streaming, internet radio, AirPlay, Spotify, Bluetooth and built-in amplification, creating a ‘just



QUAD ARTERA PLAY

Type CD player/DAC/pre-amplifier

Price £1399

Digital inputs Two optical, two coaxial/electrical, asynchronous USB-Type B

Analogue inputs Two sets, on RCA phonos

Digital outputs Optical, coaxial/electrical (up to 192kHz/24bit)

Analogue outputs Variable level, RCA phonos or balanced XLRs

Other connections 12V trigger out

Digital formats Up to 192kHz/24bit via optical/coaxial, up to 384kHz and DSD256 via USB

Accessories supplied Remote handset, glass top-plate, driver CD-ROM

Dimensions (WxHxD) 32x10.5x32cm

QUAD ARTERA STEREO

Type Stereo power amplifier

Price £1499

Inputs RCA phonos or balanced XLRs

Outputs One pair of speakers

Power output 140Wpc into 8 ohms

Dimensions (WxHxD) 32x15.8x33.8cm

quad-hifi.co.uk

add speakers’ system solution. It goes on sale this summer and is expected to be available for around £2000.

Back to the current Arteras, and the Play is notable for its wide-ranging format capability. Along with CD playback via its slot-loading mechanism, it has two optical TOSLink digital inputs and two coaxial, able to handle content at up to 192kHz. Meanwhile, the USB Type-B input, designed for the direct connection of a computer, covers the same range and goes on up to 384kHz, as well as DSD64/2.8MHz, DSD128/5.6MHz and DSD128/11.2MHz. In other words, it has just about every current or future music format covered, and there are also optical and coaxial digital outputs, again limited to 192kHz/24bit.

Digital-to-analogue conversion here is in the hands of the ES9018 ‘Sabre32’ DAC from California-based ESS Technology, rapidly becoming the ‘go-to’ choice for modern high-resolution audio equipment, and here used for the first time in a Quad product. There’s also a four-position digital filter selector, accessed from the remote handset. The default setting is ‘Fast’ but it is also possible to choose ‘Smooth’, which is designed for simpler recordings, lowering bandwidth a little but improving noise rejection; ‘Wide’, which gives a clear reproduction well suited to higher-resolution content; and ‘Narrow’ – I get the impression Quad doesn’t suggest using this last one for music listening, as it has ‘significant time domain ringing and is included here for comparison purposes’.

Talking of controls, the Play has just two ‘physical’ buttons, for power on/standby and disc eject: everything else is controlled

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SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The Quads provide almost all you need to create a fine system but here are some suggested additions

MAC MINI

As a source for digital files, the compact Mac Mini computer takes some beating: run it 'headless' with remote control from an iPhone or iPad



KEF'S REFERENCE ONE

The effortless power of the Quads enables them to drive a wide range of speakers: KEF's Reference One would be an excellent choice



by the remote handset or touch-sensitive panels above and below the display. (The one above the read-out does play/pause and the one below source select, while holding the source touchpad engages volume control: touching the upper pad will increase the volume, while the lower one reduces level. The option cancels after two seconds.)

In addition, the Play has an auto-standby function, which will power it down after 20 minutes of no signal. This can be cancelled with a three-second press on the power button, and the Play can also switch the Stereo power amp between 'on' and 'standby' using a 12V trigger cable.

The Artera combination has a sweet, rich sound, entirely free from any aggressive hard edges yet without stinting on detail or impact

Completing the Play specification are two sets of analogue inputs, while output is provided on both balanced XLRs and single-ended RCA phono sockets. There's no headphone socket, nor any tone controls beyond the selectable digital filters.

The Stereo power amplifier is a rather simpler device, being based around Quad's familiar Current Dumping technology and delivering a very healthy 140W per channel, which should be more than adequate for just about any speakers you choose to drive with it. Inputs are available on both XLRs and RCAs, with a rear-panel switch to select between them; there are a reasonable combination speaker terminals for 4mm plugs, spades or bare wires, and a 12V trigger socket; while the front panel has no more than an on/standby switch and a power indicator.

PERFORMANCE

Set-up and use of the Quad combination is entirely fuss-free. The two components linked with a run of Chord Company balanced cable and connected using speaker leads from the same source to my usual PMC speakers. The immediate – and lasting – impression was of a sound combining creamy effortlessness with powerful, dramatic dynamics, giving a

presentation that is both supremely easy to enjoy and entirely involving. Those digital filters do make a difference to the sound but the effect varies so much according to the disc or file being played that it's impossible for me to say that one is better suited to general listening than the others. Instead I'd suggest listeners experiment with their own set-up and library.

The sound here is one for the music lover who doesn't like hi-fi – or at least doesn't like what some see as the brash, forward sound of some modern audio equipment. The Artera combination, whether playing CDs or hi-res files from a connected computer, has a sweet, rich sound, entirely free from any aggressive hard edges, yet achieves this without stinting on the detail or impact of real music.

Play a set such as Markku Luolajan-Mikkola's fabulous-sounding Bach transcriptions for cello (Linn), and the Quads are absolutely in their element, with a delicious richness to the sound of the solo instrument, all the speed you could want to reveal the skill of the performance, and a wonderfully rich acoustic wrapped around the central image to convey no shortage of presence and atmosphere. Similarly, the Quads sail through the big, bold sound of the 2016 Vienna New Year's Concert (an Editor's Choice in the March issue), that easy-going sound making the relaxed musicianship on offer perfectly apparent and ensuring the festive nature of the performance is delivered intact to the speakers. What's more, that power amplifier – long a Quad strength – lives up to its heritage with a seamless flow of power, from the weight of a solo piano right the way through to a full orchestra filling a large concert hall, the warmth of the presentation never overshadowing the sheer amount of detail on offer.

Whether for 'lean back' listening or 'edge of the seat' involvement, this stylish combination certainly delivers, and I am sure it will delight many listeners. Its partnership of traditional Quad values and the latest technology is highly persuasive, and this is a worthy successor to the company's celebrated products of the past. **G**

Or you could try...

The slightly unusual configuration of the Quad system makes suggesting direct competitors slightly tricky...

Chord's Hugo and the Rotel RB-1582 MkII power amp

It would be possible to do something similar with a DAC able to be used straight into a power amplifier, such as Chord's Hugo, selling for £1400, and a power amp such as the Rotel RB-1582 MkII, at £1195. More information from chordelectronics.co.uk and rotel.com



Audiolab Q-DAC digital-to-analogue converter

Alternatively, you could opt for a one-brand system, for example from Quad stablemate Audiolab. The compact Q-DAC digital-to-analogue converter (£399) has variable-level analogue outputs, so you could combine it with the company's 40W-per-channel M-PWR power amplifier (£499) to make a complete system. Upgrades would include the more sophisticated M-DAC+ model, at £799, and the hugely powerful 8200MB power amps from the same stable – at £1000 each, the monobloc amps deliver 250W – while you could also add the Audiolab M-CDT, a £400 CD transport, to support an existing disc collection. Details at audiolab.co.uk



Naim Uniti SuperUniti

Finally, there is the all-in-one alternative, with the upmarket version of the original NaimUniti, the SuperUniti (£3675), combining network audio playback, digital and analogue inputs, internet/DAB/FM radio, Bluetooth connectivity and compatibility with Spotify and Tidal streaming. For more information see naimaudio.com



● REVIEW KORG DS-DAC-10R

Give your vinyl collection a new lease of life

A desktop digital-to-analogue converter with a twist – this one can record your LPs, too

The second coming of the DAC has been nothing short of spectacular. Those with a long memory will remember the first time we were introduced to these ‘black boxes’, designed to connect between our CD players and amplifiers and provide a simple means of upgrading the sound. There were other advantages, too. Separating the digital and disc-reading sections of a player – the mechanics and electrics, if you like – has the advantage of removing a source of interference, not to mention allowing power supplies to be optimised for each part of the playback process.

As players improved, however, things went a bit quiet on the DAC front, until the recent resurgence of the concept as a means of using a home computer as an audio source. Yes, home computers usually have an analogue output, but it's designed to drive modest headphones, while those offering digital audio outputs are very much in a minority. The answer is in the USB connection, and a whole new market sector has sprung up offering digital-to-analogue converters with a USB input. Connect one of these to your computer and it takes over soundcard functionality, outputting analogue audio to your hi-fi amplifier and instantly turning your PC or Mac into a source of high-resolution music.

That's just what the Korg DS-DAC-10R does. It's the latest model from a company perhaps best known for its electronic instruments and recording equipment, as well as being one of the partners in a Japan-based alliance supporting live concert streaming over the internet using ‘Double DSD’ sound quality. In other words, with the right equipment – ie a broadband internet connection, the free PrimeSeat software and a compatible DAC, such as those from Korg and some Sony models – you can enjoy live concerts in quality well beyond even that available on Super Audio CDs.

I've written about this PrimeSeat program in these pages in the past: the concerts available come not just from Japan but from various concert halls around the world, and the sound is often breathtaking. I've been enjoying them for a while now using Korg's simpler – and highly portable – DSD-DAC-100m, which sells for around £200 and is ideal for use with headphones or, using a plug adaptor, into a hi-fi system.



KORG DS-DAC-10R

Type Digital-to-analogue/analogue-to-digital converter

Price typically £500

Digital input USB Type B, asynchronous

Analogue in Line/mm phono

Outputs Line audio, headphones

Digital formats supported PCM-based to 192kHz/24-bit, DSD64/2.8MHz and DSD128/5.6MHz

Recording system via Korg AudioGate 4 software

Accessories supplied USB cable

Dimensions (WxHxD) 15.5x18.5x4.9cm

korg.com/uk

With the DS-DAC-10R, however, Korg has further upped the game: selling for around £500, the new model is much more of a desktop device, complete with a substantial volume control and RCA phono outputs to allow simple connection to an

The Korg also does analogue-to-digital conversion – and that opens up a whole new range of possibilities

amplifier or hi-fi system. Like the mobile model, it's powered from the connected computer via USB, and supports all music formats up to 5.6MHz ‘Double DSD’. But there's a twist: as well as a digital-to-analogue converter, it also does analogue-to-digital. And that opens up a whole new range of possibilities.

Beside the analogue outputs to the rear is a pair of analogue audio inputs, along with a grounding post, which is a clue to the fact that this ADC can work not just with ‘line-level’ analogue sources but also with a turntable to transfer vinyl records to the computer. Within the partnering AudioGate software, which doubles as a high-resolution music player, is pre-amplification for moving magnet phono cartridges as well as

equalisation not just for the ‘standard’ RIAA curve used on most records but also for five other curves used in the past: RIAA+IEC, NAB, Columbia, FFRR and AES.

PERFORMANCE

Even better is that the Korg is supremely simple to use. Connect it to a computer and it takes over soundcard duties – well, it does if you're using a Mac; Windows users will need to download free driver software, which comes as part of the set-up package also used to install the AudioGate 4 software. After that, there's nothing more to do save checking that your computer is using the Korg as its audio device, and you're ready to play back music or even record.

Playback is entirely intuitive, whether you use AudioGate or other player software – I had good results with Audirvana as well as when using the DAC with Roon, Tidal and Spotify on my computer – while Korg's software also makes recording from line or phono sources easy, with clear drop-down menus and controls. With very little familiarisation you can get the stops and starts completely smooth when recording.

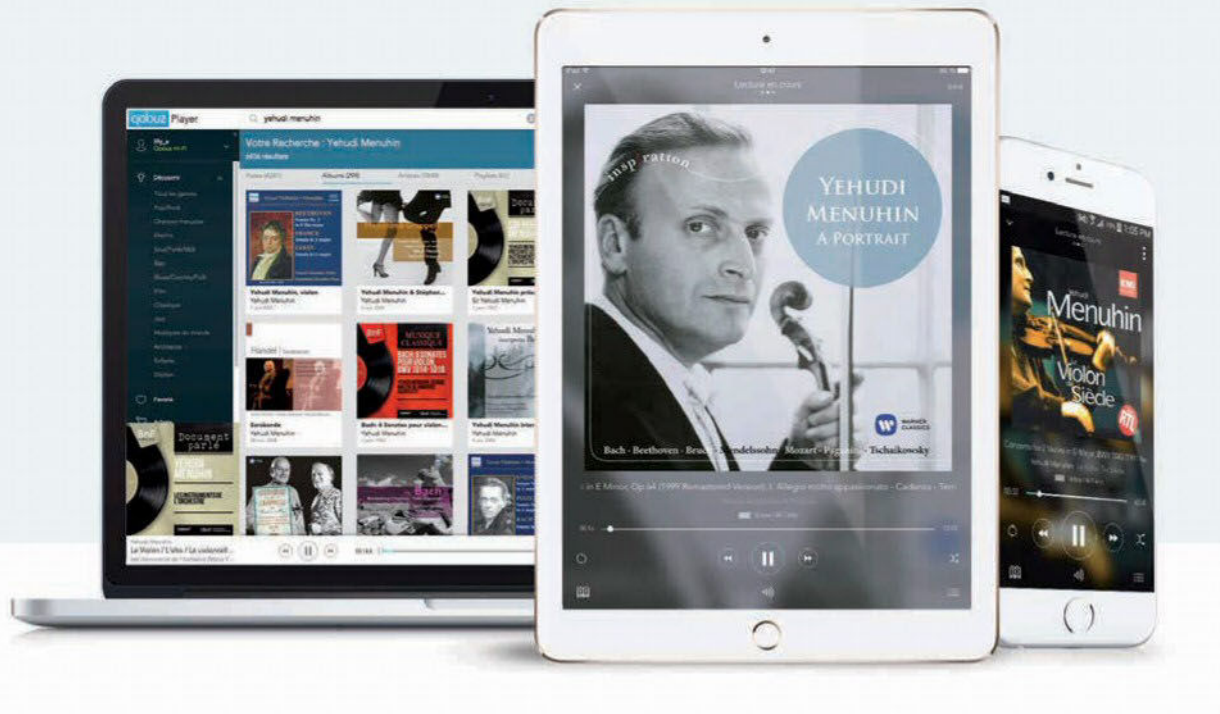
The sound quality is very good indeed when recording from vinyl, whether you choose to copy at CD quality, higher-resolution PCM or even DSD. The last of these in particular gives results just about indistinguishable from the original LP, as I discovered when copying everything from some much-played elderly discs to some more recent releases such as Linn's Dunedin Consort oratorio series.

What's more, the Korg serves its other function – as a DAC – extremely well, with a crispness and clarity to the sound that's a perfect balance with the warm, rich bass on offer. Connecting it between my ‘audio Mac’ – an inexpensive Mac Mini used exclusively for music playback – and my usual reference system, I was delighted with the big, involving sound the set-up could deliver, whether with the simplicity of solo piano or the intricate detail of the latest Bach Collegium Japan set of Bach's secular cantatas.

The Korg is an excellent addition to any ‘computer music’ system, being built to a very high standard, slick-looking and capable of a very persuasive performance. That it also has another equally impressive string to its bow makes it an even more impressive buy. **G**

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● ESSAY

'We could be about to see the return of the music centre...'

Whether it's for convenience or compactness, it seems all-in-one network audio systems are big news right now



Big daddy: Musical Fidelity's Encore 225 holds a secret within

One of the questions I'm asked most often these days starts, 'I'm thinking of ripping my CD collection, and...' Just when you thought it was safe to consider adding a network music player to your system, it seems the hi-fi market might be about to take another fork in the road. You see, walking around the annual Sound & Vision show in Bristol a month or so back, it was hard not to reach the conclusion that all-in-one systems, combining network streaming, computer connectivity and amplifier functions, are the big trend of the moment.

For some, the Naim 'music centre' was a step too far, but it paved the way for a host of 'just add speakers' systems

Almost every electronics manufacturer had a system on show and I am sure that, around the time you're reading this, the same will be true at the High End 2016 show in Munich, now acknowledged as the premium event in the hi-fi world.

Of course, such systems aren't new, as an observer not a million miles from the Salisbury factory of Naim Audio commented somewhat wryly: after all, the company more or less kick-started this trend with its NaimUniti system, launched – hard though it seems to believe it – seven years ago. Combining CD playback, amplification and network streaming, with internet radio as well as DAB/FM capability, the original NaimUniti first appeared in 2009 carrying a £2450 price tag and, after an initial 'but

what is it?' reaction in some quarters, it turned out to be the beginning of a whole new chapter for the company.

Yes, it was a radical step: this, after all, was a manufacturer hitherto best-known for modularising the hi-fi system into pre-amplifiers,

power amplifiers – often several of them used in a single set-up – and even offboard power supplies. And the classic Naim configuration often involves several racks (Naim makes those, too) of identical-looking black boxes, all glowing with that familiar green logo.

For some of the faithful, the Naim 'music centre' was a step too far – little did they know what was yet to come! – but it did pave the way for a whole range of 'just add speakers' systems, ranging from the UnitiQute to the SuperUniti, not to mention the ND- range and the latest arrival, the Mu-so 'you don't even have to add speakers' models.

Of course, Naim wasn't alone for long. The old enemy/ally from north of the border, Linn, also offered an alternative to its own 'stack of boxes' systems in the form of the Kiko, selling for the same kind of money as the NaimUniti but coming complete with speakers when it was launched in 2012. Linn was coming from a different direction: when Kiko launched, the company had already invested heavily in music storage and streaming systems, which now form the main foundation of its range. (The company dropped CD players from its line-up some seven years ago, although it still makes its signature product, the LP12 turntable.) The network system baton was also taken up by the major mass-market names in pretty short order, with the likes of Denon, Marantz, Onkyo, Pioneer and Sony having their own systems and/or incorporating network music and internet radio capability into their AV receivers.

Now, with the rise of streaming services such as Qobuz, Spotify and Tidal, and wireless connection systems such as Bluetooth and Apple's AirPlay, there's even greater impetus for the rise of such systems, and so it was at the Bristol show. For example, there was the £2500 Moon Neo ACE, a slimline – dare I suggest NaimUniti-sized? – all-in-one system complete with internet and network music services, compatibility with audio files up to and beyond SACD's DSD format, and 2x50W of built-in amplification. It sounded so good driving a pair of Totem speakers in the demonstration room that I immediately requested a review sample for a future issue, and am looking forward to getting it plumbed in and fired up at home.

Continuing the 'serious hi-fi made simple' theme was the impressively non-threatening-looking Quad Artera One, due on sale in the next few months at a price expected to be in the region of £2000. It's based on the existing Artera components (reviewed on page 114), and continues the minimal look of the Artera Play CD player/DAC/pre-amp despite also offering Bluetooth, AirPlay, internet radio, network streaming and Spotify, not to mention onboard amplification and multiple analogue and digital inputs.

However, the 'big daddy' system seen at the show, seemingly untroubled by the slimline trend, was the M6 Encore 225 from London-based Musical Fidelity, apparently set to be the beginning of a whole new range of Encore products. Based on the technology of the company's M6si integrated amplifier, with which it shares its 225Wpc power amps, the Encore 225 has a large, bright colour display above its slot-loading disc transport, and a secret within in the form of an upgradeable 1TB internal hard drive, which is able to store a huge amount of music. It will rip to this drive using its CD drive (which also, of course, functions as a CD player), and will then play out the music it stores or make it available to other network music players, including popular wireless systems such as Sonos. And, like the other network systems, it's software-upgradable, allowing it to keep pace with future music developments – an important attribute when you're putting all your hi-fi eggs in one basket, so to speak.

This 'all-in-one' trend is one I am sure is set to grow. If the industry is to attract newcomers to serious audio or tempt back those who have got off the upgrading treadmill, that can only be a good thing. ●

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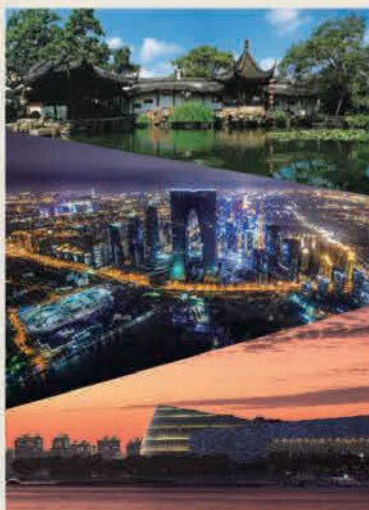
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NOTES & LETTERS

Under-performed Howells • In defence of Boulez • Menuhin on the rostrum

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Neglected Howells

It was fascinating to read Martin Cullingford's probing interview with Stephen Layton (March) and Layton's reflections on recording Howells's great *Collegium Regale* evening canticles. But aren't we in danger of blinkered vision when it comes to Howells's church music? Like the late Beethoven quartets, Howells's later canticles – the *Dallas Service*, the *St Augustine Service* – contain some of his most radical and astonishing music, but we almost never hear them. Wouldn't it be nourishing to have these extremely rare works recorded afresh now and then? Or even included for once in the BBC's *Choral Evensong* broadcasts that MC mentions? I don't recall them being broadcast for around 16 years, whereas the *Collegium Regale* comes up multiple times in a year.

Andrew Mellor, via email

In praise of Boulez

I was surprised by N Forton-Evans's letter denigrating both Boulez and his music (March). I have been listening to it for over 65 years and much of it seems quite wonderful and interesting to me. Since the early days when I became acquainted with the marvellous *Notations* and the brilliant Second Sonata, I have greatly enjoyed each new piece (there were not as many as I would have wished). Important masterpieces (according to my obviously subjective evaluation) such as *Répons*, *Dérive* or especially *Sur incises* complement the thrilling chamber works such as *Anthèmes I & II*, *Dialogue de l'ombre double*, etc.

Looking at these scores I can see (hear) many reasons to consider them true innovations in contemporary composition.



Stephen Layton: championing the music of Howells

Letter of the Month



Unstoppable: Barbirolli's heart condition didn't prevent him from recording Verdi's *Otello*

The sad story behind Barbirolli's *Otello*

In his survey of the available recordings of Verdi's late masterpiece *Otello* (Collection, April), Richard Lawrence notes: 'The critics expressed disappointment in [Barbirolli's recording] especially in comparison with an idiomatic *Madama Butterfly* recorded in Rome a year or two earlier.' In the years between these two recordings (1968-1970), Barbirolli's health had deteriorated dramatically. He continued to work at a phenomenal pace, but he was very ill with what was to prove a fatal heart condition at the time of the *Otello* recording. Whatever its shortcomings, I have always treasured

this set. In my final year at Cambridge, Barbirolli came to the Corn Exchange to give a promotional lecture on *Otello* illustrated with excerpts from his recent recording. It was obvious at the outset of the evening that he was not at all well, and he had to leave the platform during the middle of his talk, returning with some difficulty to complete it after some 40 minutes. He died suddenly, later that same year. Plans for him to conduct *Otello* at Covent Garden, and to record Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* and Verdi's *Falstaff* were abandoned.

Keith Pearce
Penzance, Cornwall

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Please send letters responding to articles in this issue for consideration for publication in the June issue by April 29. Gramophone reserves the right to edit all letters for publication.

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As far as Boulez the man is concerned; other than purposely being polemical in order to achieve his clearly stated objectives, he was a delightful, highly cultured and interesting person. Spending time with him either in the concert hall, during rehearsals, or simply over coffee was always a privilege.

Jorge Helft, via email

Rozhdestvensky's UK debut

I very much enjoyed Peter Quantrill's article on Gennady Rozhdestvensky (Icons, April) but I think his first notable appearance in the UK was not in 1971 but in 1962. That year I had the great fortune to be living in Edinburgh and had the opportunity to attend most of the concerts featuring Shostakovich and his Soviet colleagues. Maxim Shostakovich bought



Technique aside, Menuhin was a conductor who 'radiated music'

a Lew Stone record while I was browsing at Rae Macintosh's shop and during the interval of the final concert I was alone in a room in the grand tier with Dmitri Shostakovich. The whole festival was a wonderful experience. Shostakovich was as new to me then as Beethoven, and the experience at that festival encouraged me subsequently to listen to a wide variety of composers.

According to the Edinburgh Festival brochure I have for 1962, Rozhdestvensky conducted the Philharmonia Orchestra at Usher Hall in symphonies by Shostakovich and Prokofiev (September 4) and more Shostakovich (three days later). For both concerts, I had a seat in the organ gallery and I still vividly remember Gennady Rozhdestvensky's infectious enthusiasm and cheerful smile as he conducted these memorable programmes.
Dr David Butchers, via email

Period-instrument Haydn

I write regarding Universal's new, complete period-instrument cycle of Haydn symphonies (February). In September 1978, Christopher Hogwood made his first Haydn symphony recording: the Salomon arrangement of Haydn's No 94. Two further Salomon arrangements, Nos 100 and 104, were recorded, first in 1982 and then again a year later with his AAM forces. Another LP featuring Nos 94 and 96 was released the following year to great acclaim.

Soon it was announced that Hogwood and the AAM were to record all Haydn's symphonies throughout the 1990s for L'Oiseau Lyre (including the four recorded previously) – it was to be the first complete Haydn symphony cycle on period instruments. However, after the first 10 volumes, the series was abruptly abandoned (leaving Nos 76 and 77, which had been recorded in 1996 for Vol 11, never to be released).

With good intentions, in 2012 Universal Italy planned a box-set which aimed to gather all the Haydn symphonies. Hogwood had been able to record for L'Oiseau-Lyre. As a close personal acquaintance of Hogwood, I noticed that Symphonies Nos 76 and 77 had been missed out of the planning but by then it was too late for Universal Italy to include them. Nearly 20 years after Decca dropped

the project, it is comforting to see the thread has been picked up again, and particularly that Nos 76 and 77 have been reinstalled.

Haydn had always played an important role in Hogwood's career. He often referred to himself as a 'Handel and Haydn person'. When he conducted Symphony No 82 (*Bear*) in Taichung, Taiwan in 2013, I was able to observe closely how he shaped and created the classical style with the orchestra: balanced, strict, yet beautiful, full of refreshing life and touches. I was also in the audience when he played the Salomon arrangement of No 104 in Athens in 2008 – a wonderful performance.

*Wei-Chin Chen
Taipei, Taiwan*

Maestro Menuhin

In your interesting article on Yehudi Menuhin (April), Tully Potter makes the point that he was 'no conductor'. This may well be true but I remember vividly playing for him in the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (it was around 1974, I think). He didn't need any technique as such: he just seemed to stand there simply radiating the music: one knew exactly what he wanted, just by his presence.

Neil Mantle, via email

Editorial notes

Regarding Geoffrey Norris's feature on Yevgeny Sudbin and his recent Scarlatti release on BIS, the Minnesota Orchestra wasn't working due to a lock-out, and not a strike as stated.

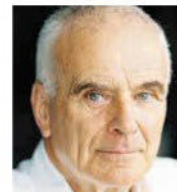
Regarding the review of Mahler's Symphony No 3 (April), it was No 4, not No 3, that was the first of the Bernstein cycle to be recorded (on February 1, 1960). The Third followed in April of the following year although, in the UK, No 4 was not issued until the complete set appeared in the mid-1970s.

OBITUARIES

A radical composer who became Master of the Queen's Music, and a musical philanthropist

SIR PETER MAXWELL DAVIES

*Composer and conductor
Born September 8, 1934
Died March 14, 2016*



Born in Salford, Lancashire, Peter Maxwell Davies studied at the Royal Manchester College of Music where he numbered among his

contemporaries Harrison Birtwistle, John Ogdon, Elgar Howarth and Alexander Goehr. After studies with Roger Sessions and Milton Babbitt at Princeton, he returned to the UK and established himself as one of the most original voices of the 1960s.

In 1967 he and Harrison Birtwistle assumed the direction of the ensemble the Pierrot Players, which later became the Fires of London. They focused on the performance of new music, often with a dramatic dimension. Birtwistle left the group in 1970, apparently finding the instrumentation (flute, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, keyboards and percussion) constricting. As well as giving first performances of many of Davies's own works, the group also programmed music by Elliott Carter, Morton Feldman, Oliver Knussen, Hans Werner Henze and others. The ensemble disbanded completely in 1987.

Davies's move to the Orkney Islands in 1971 had a profound effect on his compositional voice and he established the St Magnus Festival in 1977 where he could share his music and that of his colleagues with his neighbours and, increasingly, with a large international audience.

He was knighted in 1987, becoming a Companion of Honour in 2014. In 2016, the Royal Philharmonic Society awarded him its Gold Medal. From 2004 to 2014 he was Master of the Queen's Music, a post he took characteristically seriously despite his republican views – views which softened over the years. He also held the posts of Associate Conductor/Composer with the BBC Philharmonic and, latterly, as Composer Laureate with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

Among his large output are 10 symphonies, six operas (his last, the

children's opera *The Higboon*, is due to receive its premiere under the baton of Simon Rattle (in June), numerous chamber works (including the 'Naxos Quartets' written for and recorded by the Maggini Quartet), many concertos including the 10 called 'Strathclyde', and choral works, many of a sacred nature. Among his most often-performed works are the *Eight Songs for a Mad King* from 1969, *Farewell to Stromness* (1980) and *An Orkney Wedding, with Sunrise* (1986).

His first appearance in our pages, incidentally, was back in January 1963. In a report from Manchester, about the young group of musicians with links to the city, Arthur Jacobs wrote: 'Together, Ogdon and Howarth performed a sonata by Peter Maxwell Davies, against whose name I scribbled in my programme the enthusiastic words: "A real composer!"'

His last appearance in our reviews pages was for his Symphony No 10 (A/10), written during a period of hospital treatment for leukaemia, and which drew on his fondness for Italy, and, in particular, his interest in the architect Borromini. Recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus under Sir Antonio Pappano, it was a work that our critic Arnold Whittall described as 'a profoundly personal musical statement, bringing together some of the most fundamental ideas and issues to have concerned Davies throughout his long career'.

SIR PETER MOORES

Philanthropist

Born April 9, 1932;

Died March 24, 2016



Peter Moores, best known to classical record collectors for his support of numerous recording projects, has died; he was 83. Born into the wealthy Moores family – owners of the Littlewoods empire of pools, department stores and mail-order business – Moores was sent to school at Eton which, as he told *Gramophone* in March 2003, 'was the start of my real musical education because you could get to Covent Garden. I remember seeing Welitsch in *Salome*, and Erich Kleiber's *Wozzeck*, which made a tremendous impression. I would go and see everything. I don't think it was the spectacle that drew me to opera – productions then weren't particularly sophisticated – but it was the idea of "performance", the singers creating

characters and bringing the work to life that really attracted me.'

He then went to Christ Church, Oxford, where he read German and Italian. His passion for opera was already formed and he worked at Glyndebourne during his 'gap' year. He later studied at the Vienna Academy of Music and then worked at Vienna State Opera (as an assistant producer), San Carlo Opera House in Naples and Rome Opera.

He joined the family firm in 1957, ascending to vice-chairman and then chairman. He remained on the board and as a director until 1993. But his first love was his charitable and philanthropic work which he'd established, as a Foundation, in his early twenties when he inherited a half share in the Moores empire.

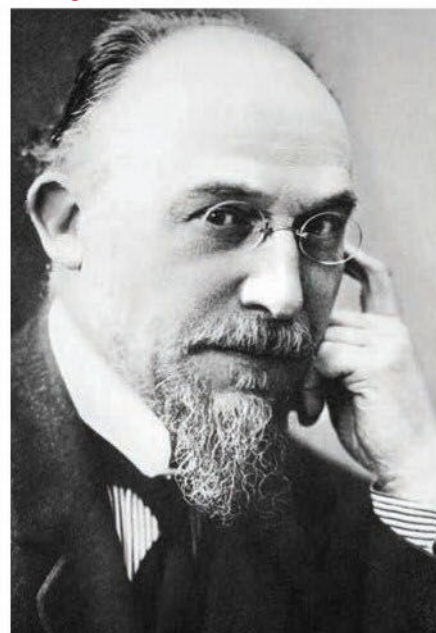
He supported numerous young artists early in their careers through his Foundation (some of our greatest names benefited – Sir Colin Davis, Dame Joan Sutherland and Sir Geraint Evans among them) and offered bursaries to music students. Here the names are equally illustrious: Joan Rodgers, Rosalind Plowright, Toby Spence and Simon Keenlyside all received support from his Foundation.

He helped fund recording projects that the record companies baulked at – such as Wagner's *Ring* cycle, sung in English and conducted by Reginald Goodall, and recorded at the Coliseum by EMI. He was a passionate advocate of opera sung in the language of its audience and financed the Chandos 'Opera in English' series of complete works and recitals. He also helped set up Opera Rara to record operatic rarities and, often, related stage and concert performances. The company continues to thrive, though he wound up his Foundation two years ago, after half a century.

In the visual arts he supported art exhibitions at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool and, from 1983, the magnificent gallery at Compton Verney in Warwickshire. He was also a major donor to business studies at Oxford University, and endowed a Peter Moores Professorship of Management Studies.

Moores was given *Gramophone's* Special Achievement Award in 2008, at which time we wrote that 'The Arts have long benefited from the patronage and generosity of wealthy men, but in the UK – which lags a long way behind the US in individual donations – there have been few people who have supported music, and above all opera, with the interested and informed generosity of Sir Peter Moores.'

NEXT MONTH
JUNE 2016



Celebrating the genius of Satie at 150

For the 150th anniversary of Satie's birth, Peter Quantrill explores the quirky eccentricity of this inimitable French composer

Hall of Fame 2016

We reveal the 10 people voted for this year, all of whom have made significant contributions to recorded classical music

The Stradella Project

David Vickers travels to an Italian festival dedicated to Baroque composer Stradella

Richard Egarr in G&S

The harpsichordist/conductor turns his hand to HMS Pinafore in a new recording for Linn

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Schumann Vc Conc. Pf Trio No 1. <i>Queyras/Faust/Melnikov/ Freiburg Baroque Orch/Heras-Casado</i> .	🇫🇷 (CD + DVD) HMC90 2197
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Mozart Vn Sons. <i>Ibragimova/Tiberghien</i> .	🇩🇪 ② CDA68091
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Neuwirth Goodnight Mommy. <i>OST</i> .	🇫🇷 0015009KAI
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Brahms Syms Nos 3 & 4. <i>Brandenburg St Orch, Frankfurt/ Griffiths</i> .	🇫🇷 KL1514
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Henze Sym No 7. <i>Gürzenich Orch, Cologne/Stenz</i> .	🇫🇷 OC446
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Julian Ovenden

The singer-actor, who starred in Foyle's War and Downton Abbey, on how classical training helped to prepare him for his dual profession

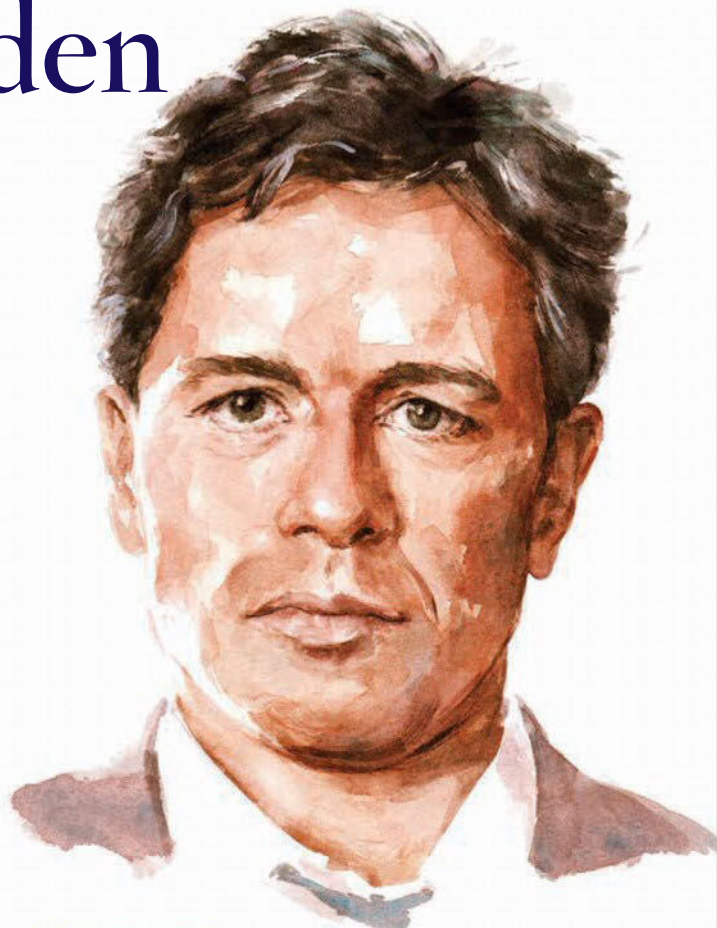
I was very lucky with the three people who guided me in my musical education when I was young. I started as a chorister, at seven years old, at St Paul's Cathedral and the person who was in charge of us there was John Scott, who died very young last year. He really was a brilliant musician, a very passionate man and a fantastic organist. He used to teach me the organ. When I think back on it, it was so lax: I used to get the keys and in the evenings – when I was 11 or 12 – I'd let myself in, turn on the lights, go up to the organ loft and make as much noise as I possibly could! And this was St Paul's Cathedral! It was like getting the keys to a Ferrari.

It was a tough life as a chorister; it was sort of at the end of that Victorian style of schooling. There were 35 kids. We'd do an hour of music practice before breakfast. Then there'd be another hour of singing before school. Then we'd get to 4 o'clock, another hour, and then there'd be a service. And you'd be at school until Christmas Day. It was hard, but it did give you a real grounding.

Then there was Ralph Allwood at Eton – again a fantastic musician, a brilliant choirmaster but also a rather more relaxed person than John was. He was my tutor at school and a really fine musician and trainer. And then when I was at Oxford I had the good fortune to be working under Edward Higginbottom. That was a different kind of music-making, even though it was still choral. His expertise is French Baroque and there was a real style and élan about it that I'd not experienced before – a real professionalism that was new to me – and it was exciting.

I was mixing a track yesterday for my new album, and I kept thinking about some of those amazing Baroque compositions that have so much going on, and yet all have the same purpose. Just think of Monteverdi's *Vespers* where you have brass over there, a choir over there, strings there – everyone dotted around all over the place. This particular track has a mass of different players and, rather than present a great wall of sound, I wanted to differentiate between them.

I call the album 'grown-up popular music' – American music from basically the 1920s to the '50s with a real emphasis on the lyrics as much as the music. I really wanted the best pianist for it, so we went to a guy called Tedd Firth who I did a gig with at Carnegie Hall a couple of years ago. He's a little bit like me in that he's a bit of a hybrid. He's a fantastic jazz musician but he could also play the *Paganini* Variations! That kind of dexterity and sensibility really excites me. He works with Tony Bennett and Michael Feinstein. We were recording in United Studios in LA where Sinatra



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Verdi *Un ballo in maschera*

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The singing of Pavarotti and Price at the start of Act 2 has to rate as some of the most sublime, passionate ever. I wish I'd heard Pavarotti live.

worked after he left Capitol. What I was looking for was a particular sound, and that's what you get in those places. It's like John Eliot Gardiner choosing a particular place to record the Brahms *German Requiem* as opposed to the *St John Passion*. I was looking for that specificity of sound. And a lot of the session brass players had been playing that kind of music for the past 40, 50 years.

I'm often asked, if I had to choose, would it be singing or acting? But I see them as basically the same thing. One of the advantages of being a musician is that you don't have to get permission to do it – you can do it at home. But as an actor you're often waiting for the green light from a production company or a director, for someone to say, 'Hey, we want you to do this,' and then you're off. So you can't really practise acting, but as a musician you can take yourself off to a piano – and I do that every day. I like discipline and routine – maybe that's because, as a chorister, my musical training was 15 years of singing pretty well every day, learning music and churning it out in essentially a professional environment, and as an actor you don't get that. What I love about music is that there's a discernible process. **●** *Julian Ovenden's new album, 'Be My Love', is out now*

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